Stage 1:
Envisioning and equipping the church
Overview of Stage 1: Envisioning and equipping the church

**Aim of this stage:**

To help the church develop a vision for working with its community and use its resources to run a small project.

Stage 1 is made up of the following parts:

1. **Envisioning the church**
   - Use Bible studies and activities to help the church have a vision for working with their community.

2. **Using our resources**
   - Look at the resources the church has and how they can be used in the community.

3. **Local church initiative**
   - Set up a small initiative using the church’s own resources.

4. **Learning and reflection**
   - Look back at the church initiative and celebrate what went well and discuss what could be improved on in the future.

**It involves the following activities:**

1. **Energisers**
   - Included in this stage are a number of energisers which are designed to be used either before or after the Bible studies. Energisers are important for not only keeping people awake but also helping the learning to be fun and relaxing. They also have an important role in creating a sense of belonging as people share a common experience. It is important when using these energisers to get the group to draw lessons and insights from them.

2. **Bible studies**
   - Stage 1 is based on using a series of Bible studies to inspire church members to get excited about working in their community. Bible studies are very important.

   - For the church to reflect on what God is calling them to be and do in the community
   - For people to be challenged and encouraged to grow in their faith
   - For small groups to learn together and share understanding
   - To empower people and give them confidence.

   Once the church has worked through these Bible studies it should try to formulate a vision for its work in the community and begin to think about the practical things it can do with the community. Once the church has a vision for working with the community the church then needs to consider how it can meet both its own needs and those of the community from their own resources. This point is reinforced in the Bible studies and is really important to emphasise, as this is a critical feature making any initiative sustainable in the longer term.
Part 1: Envisioning the church

Aim of Part 1:
To envision the church to work with the community to meet their physical and spiritual needs. This can be achieved by five key steps, which are explained in detail on the following pages.

Key steps
1. Meet the church leaders and plan how the church will be envisioned.
2. Use the energiser with the church to get people to think about the challenges of working together.
3. Use one or more of the Bible studies and reflect on what this means for their own church and community.
4. Carry out the celebration activity which looks at the history of the church and community.
5. Set up a church co-ordination group (CCG).

3. Celebration activities
Celebration activities are included in this section because they help people to have a positive and energetic view of their situation. We have tried to link each of the celebration activities to the relevant themes but feel free to select one according to the needs of the group.

Why is celebration important?

- Is part of our worship to God
- Helps us to appreciate each other
- Helps us to know what we do best
- Helps us to think about what we could build on
- Builds confidence in what we can do
- Gives us energy to take on new opportunities

Help us think about our potential as a group to do good things together
Step 1: Meeting the church leader

Building a relationship

Before discussing Umoja with the church leader it is important to spend time just getting to know them and the church. It is important to make sure that Umoja is what the church leader really wants to do, and that they have appropriate levels of expectation. It is often the case that local church leaders are more willing to get involved with Umoja when their senior church leader or bishop has already given approval for the process.

Facilitators also need to be aware that some church leaders may have a hidden agenda that could potentially undermine the aims of Umoja. For example, these could be a desire to use Umoja to gain funding for an alternative activity, or to use Umoja to gain prestige and profile within the community, or to increase their influence. Because of this it is important to take time to get to know the church leader and clarify their understanding of what they think Umoja can achieve.

Things to discuss with the church leader:

- The purpose and benefits of Umoja.
- How Umoja works.
- The church leader’s role in Umoja.
- Any issues within the church and the community that could affect Umoja.
- The possibility of making Umoja a joint initiative of a number of churches in the community.
- How to run the activities and Bible studies with the church, and who can help with them.
Dealing with concerns

In some cases there may be some initial resistance to starting the process for any number of reasons. It is really important to address any concerns and emphasise the benefits of the process at the beginning. For example:

- Church leaders may be concerned that Umoja may divert the church’s giving away from the church and towards the community. Point out that one of the results of Umoja is almost always an increase in the church’s giving.
- Church leaders may be concerned that it will distract their church members from doing evangelism. Point out that Umoja helps to improve church and community relationships which often results in the growth of the church.
- Church leaders may be concerned that they and their church members do not have the resources or the time to run community projects. Point out that Umoja is about the church and community working together and therefore the load will be shared.
- Church leaders may be concerned about the length of time the process may take. Be honest and realistic about this, but remind them that significant change does not happen overnight.
- Some church leaders may be reluctant to work with other churches in the community. Point out that Umoja is about a united witness of the church to serve the community. It can be a great thing for inter-church relationships.

Step 2: Energiser - Thinking about the challenge of working together

Lowering the stick

This is a good game for getting people to think about the challenges of working together.

This is what you do:

1. Divide the group into two lines of up to eight people.
2. Place a long stick or bamboo between the two lines and get each person to hold it with one finger.
3. Make sure that the stick is level and everyone is holding it, and then tell the group that they have to lower it together making sure the stick is level, until it reaches the ground.
4. Encourage the group to discuss what helped the task be achieved and what the challenges were.
5. Encourage the group to discuss what they can learn from the game for how they work together in the church.

You may know of other energisers that would be equally good for getting people to think about working together, so feel free to use those instead.
Part 1: Envisioning the church

**Step 3: Bible studies**

**The ministry of Jesus - local church envisioning**

This Bible study could be done in three parts either simultaneously by three different groups or by one group at three different times.

**Compassion**

Read Matthew 9:35-38

1. How are the descriptions of Jesus’ work in this passage similar to what is described in Matthew 4:23-25? What new things do we learn about Jesus’ ministry?

2. What words or images would you use to describe people who are “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”?

3. The word translated “compassion” (verse 36) is a strong word. It really hurts Jesus to see people as they are. How do we respond when we see people in need?

4. What is our motivation when we try to help people in need? Is it similar or different to that of Jesus?

5. Why do you think Jesus’ compassionate response to those in need leads him to say, “the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few”? (verse 37)

**Key point:** The kingdom of God warmly welcomes those who are harassed and helpless, but there are few workers who share Jesus’ compassion for them, and want to help.

**Healing**

Read Matthew 4:12-13, 23-25

1. What does Jesus do?

   **Key point:** Jesus initially went to where people were in order to do his work. It was the result of him going to them that in time the people began to come to him.

2. What brought so many people to come and hear Jesus?

3. What does Jesus’ healing ministry tell us about the kingdom of God?

4. How is your own church demonstrating or not demonstrating the healing ministry of Jesus? How does your church need to change?

**Repentance**

Read Matthew 3:1-2 and 4:17

Why do you think Jesus is repeating John the Baptist’s message?

**Key point:** Jesus is giving his agreement to the message that John the Baptist had preached.

1. What was the content of what John the Baptist preached? (Read Luke 3:7-14)

2. Which particular sins did John stress needed repentance, if people were to be ready for the kingdom of God? Make a list.

3. If John were to preach in our community today, what sins would he tell people to repent of? Make a list.

4. From what Jesus and John preached, what are the characteristics of the kingdom of God?

5. How is your own church demonstrating or not demonstrating these characteristics today? How does your church need to change?

**Key point:** This passage shows us that God does not tolerate the abuse of the poor or the unfairly gained wealth of the rich.

**Conclusion**

After bringing together all the answers and discussion from the three studies, consider these concluding questions:

1. What have we learned about the kingdom of God?

2. How do I need to change in order to show more of God’s kingdom in my own life?

3. How do we as a church need to change in order to show more of God’s kingdom in our community?
Part 1: Envisioning the church

The story of Bartimaeus

Introduction

This is an important story for helping church groups reflect on the unique role the church has in working with the poor, and how this is one of the ways we worship.

Read Mark 10:46-52

It would be good to act the story out as a group.

Questions:

1. What are the changes you notice in the attitude of the crowd towards Bartimaeus in this story?

2. What are the reasons for these changes?

3. If the crowd represented the church today, what negative attitudes does the church have towards people who are vulnerable and marginalised?

4. What can be done to address these negative attitudes?

Key learning points that should come out of the discussion

1. The crowd represents the church, and Jesus challenges the church to have a focus on the vulnerable and marginalised.

2. Jesus used the crowd to bring Bartimaeus to him and to be at the centre of the crowd. In the same way, the church is called upon to put the marginalised and vulnerable at the centre of the church’s ministry.

3. Jesus responded to Bartimaeus by finding out what his needs were and responding accordingly. He also involved others in meeting those needs.

Step 4: Celebration activity - Celebrating our history

Purpose

To look back at key events that have shaped both our church and the local community and to see what to build on for the future.

Step-by-step guide

1. Get a long piece of paper and lay it on the floor or across some tables with enough room for people to walk round it.

2. Draw a line from one end of the paper to the other and decide the length of time this represents, which could be one year, ten years or more.

3. As a group, decide the key events in the order in which they occurred and mark them on the line.

4. Write the things that went well above the line and the things that did not go so well below the line.

5. Discuss why things went well, and why other things did not go so well, using the following questions, and decide what lessons there are for the future.

Questions

1. What have been the best moments? Why?

2. What has been the most challenging?

3. What can we build on for the future?

Tips

1. You could draw pictures to make the line look more visual.

2. If there is a large group (more than ten) make sure everyone can see the timeline and can contribute. Otherwise make two or three groups and compare timelines at the end of the session.

3. It is important as a facilitator to keep the momentum of the activity going and not to get stuck on one particular event. It is also important to explore with the group why an event was good or bad and what lessons or insights they have gained from it to apply to the future.
Step 5: Setting up a church co-ordination group (CCG)

The church co-ordination group (CCG) is a group of people who are willing to support the facilitator during the envisioning meetings and to plan a church project and see it through. Initial support from the facilitator would include ensuring everyone knows when and where the meeting is and following up specific actions.

The experience of planning and running a project is a good opportunity for the co-ordination group to develop skills and expertise which they can use in the wider community in the next phase of Umoja.

Key steps for selecting and training a church co-ordination group

1. With the church members, agree some criteria by which people are selected. The criteria could include:
   - are they respected by the other church members?
   - are they known for their energy and enthusiasm?
   - do they have practical skills?

2. Look at the Bible study on page 37. Ask people to consider what would be the best method to select people. Is it by invitation or should people volunteer for this group?

3. Once the group has been selected, agree specific roles for the members of the CCG and agree a time and place to meet on a regular basis.

4. Plan a session to brief the members of the CCG in more detail about how Umoja works and the role of the CCG. Refer them to pages 8-13 which give the overview of Umoja and pages 17-21 which give some tips on facilitation skills.

5. Explain the role of the CCG in helping the church run a small project. This will be good preparation for when the church sets up a project with the community.

6. It is important that the CCG work with the facilitator in planning the sessions and reviewing how they went.

Role of the CCG

- Ask them to organise the meetings with the church.
- Involve them in facilitating small groups.
- Ask them to record learning and key points from discussions.

Bible study: The choosing of the seven deacons

Read Acts 6:1-7

You may find it helpful to act out the events of the story so that people are able to visualise what is going on.

1. What is happening in this story?

2. What is the problem that has arisen? Do you think such a problem could arise in your community? Who are the kind of people that would be overlooked?

3. What do the 12 disciples decide to do? Do you think this is a good decision? Why or why not?

4. Who chooses who the new group of seven people responsible for looking after the widows should be? What advice do the 12 disciples give about what kind of people it would be good to choose?

5. How is this story relevant to Umoja and your own church and community?

6. Is there a need for some of the new responsibilities arising from Umoja to be shared amongst more people? If so:
   - how should this be decided?
   - who should choose them?
   - what qualities should these new people have?
Part 2: Using our resources

Aim of Part 2:
To help church members recognise that many problems and challenges can be met with their own resources.

Key steps
1. Use the energiser to get people thinking about working together with what they have.
2. Do the Bible studies and reflect on what they are saying. Select the studies that are appropriate to your group.
3. Carry out the celebration activity to reflect what resources the church has and, if helpful, use the table at the end to record all the information that has been gathered.
4. Think about the needs and the resources in the church using the table provided.

Step 1: Energiser - Making the longest line
This is a good activity for getting a group to think about what they can do with their own resources. It can generate a lot of fun and laughter as well as provide some useful learning. In using this exercise it is important to be sensitive to local culture and tradition.

1. Ask the group to form two lines with an equal number of people in each line.
2. Explain they are going to use anything they have on them to make the longest possible line (shoe laces, belts, shirts etc).
3. Each person must be in contact with another person either by means of a part of the body or an article of clothing.
4. The team that wins is the one that forms the longest line.

Questions
1. To what lengths were people prepared to go to make the line as long as possible?
2. What were the barriers to people sharing what they had?
3. What does this exercise teach us about using our own resources?

Learning points to discuss with the group are:
- It can surprise us when we see what we can achieve by only using what we have.
- Sometimes challenging situations produce natural leaders.
- Once people have a clear vision of what is needed they become motivated and energised.
- Challenging situations can produce creativity. For example, people may decide to lie down on the ground to make the line longer or find creative uses for their clothes and accessories.
- For some people this exercise may be uncomfortable and sometimes giving up our resources for the common good can be challenging and uncomfortable too.
Part 2: Using our resources

Step 2: Bible studies

The raising of Lazarus

Read the whole story (John 11:1-44) or the key passages for this study (John 11:1-3, 17, 32-44). You may find it helpful to act out the events of the story so that people are able to visualise what is going on.

1. What is happening in this story? List the different people involved in the story, and what they each do.
2. How does Jesus involve others in the miracle that takes place?
3. Jesus could have done the miracle all by himself. Why do you think he chooses to involve others?
4. What does this tell us about Jesus and his kingdom? What does this tell us about ourselves?

Key point: Jesus involved people in the raising of Lazarus – they showed Jesus the tomb, they rolled away the stone, they untied the grave clothes. He wanted to show not only God’s power over death, but also that people have resources that they can offer and use in doing God’s work.

Elisha and the jars

Read 2 Kings 4:1-7

Discuss the following questions:
1. What were the key events in this story?
2. Who played what role?
3. What were the resources available to the widow and her sons?
4. What can we learn from this story which we could apply to how communities can use what they have got to overcome problems of poverty?
5. Look at the table below and get the participants to construct their own version, similar to this one. This is a good way to introduce simple planning skills which they can use for planning a church or community project, using their own resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Her needs</th>
<th>Her resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Release from inherited debts of her husband</td>
<td>Small amount of oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of children who could be sold into slavery to pay for debts</td>
<td>Empty jars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future income</td>
<td>Wisdom of Elijah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>Family labour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key point: With God’s help, and if we are willing to share, the resources we have can make a difference in addressing our poverty.
Part 2: Using our resources

The feeding of the five thousand

Read Mark 6:30-44

Discuss the following questions and brainstorm answers on to a blackboard or a large piece of paper:

1. Who are the main players in this story?
2. What specific actions did they take?
3. What was the need in this story? What were the resources?

Then break into twos or threes and answer these questions:

4. What steps did Jesus take to perform the miracle?
5. In this story, what did Jesus focus on? What did the disciples focus on?
6. How were the resources used to meet the need identified?

Finally, come back together and discuss as a group:

7. Why do you think Jesus used those steps? List them.
8. How could he have performed this miracle differently? Why did he not do it differently?
9. What does this passage tell us about the way we should facilitate the church and the community to meet their needs?
10. What would a miracle look like for our community? Think about the resources we have to put in God’s hands.

Get the participants to fill in the table below based on the crowd in the Bible study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Their needs</th>
<th>Their resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The crowd was hungry</td>
<td>Five loaves, two fishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The crowd needed to be organised</td>
<td>The power of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The food needed distributing</td>
<td>Disciples who organised them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual teaching</td>
<td>Empty baskets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disciples to distribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table should look something like this:

Key point: God wants to use us, and our resources, to bring about transformation in our lives and the life of our community.
Part 2: Using our resources

Step 3: Celebration activity - Celebrating what we have

Purpose
To enable the church and community members to realise the potential within themselves to bring change and transformation to the community.

Step-by-step guide
1. Divide into groups and discuss the resources, gifts and talents in the church and community.
2. Go off in groups and collect objects that represent the resources, gifts and talents discussed in point 1.
3. Lay out the objects in the shape of a cross on the floor, explaining what the different items represent.
4. Record these items on a large sheet of paper as people lay their objects down.
5. Divide a sheet of paper into skills, knowledge and experience and group the items under these headings.
6. As a large group discuss the following question:
   a) What skills and knowledge do we have in our church or community that could be used to make things better?
   b) What experiences do we have in our church or community that could be shared with others?

Tips
If it does not come up in discussion, you may like to remind the community that their resources include knowledge, time and prayer.

Once all the objects have been put down in the shape of a cross, play some music or sing a song to allow people to reflect on the range of resources, gifts and talents.

Step 4: Assessing what the church needs and what the church has

1. As a group, brainstorm some of the needs the church is facing and then prioritise which are the three greatest needs.
2. Use the list below to think about the different resources your local church has and how they can be used to address the various needs identified in the church.

Natural resources
- forest products
- water
- minerals

Human resources
- labour
- skills
- experience

Financial resources
- cash
- livestock
- crops
- retail products

Physical resources
- buildings
- roads
- bridges
- wells

Spiritual resources
- prayer
- worship
- fasting
- Bible studies
Part 3: Local church initiative

Aim of Part 3:
To help the church plan and do an activity to meet a need in the church with their own resources.

Key steps
1. Use the energiser activity with the big container.
2. Do the Bible study.
3. Use the tables with the minibus exercise to plan a simple project.
4. Set up a small team of volunteers to run a project.
5. Review how it went.

Step 1: Energiser - The big container
Purpose: To help participants put into practice solving a problem with limited resources and explore how to work together effectively as a team.

Materials required:
• String to mark out an area 3m squared
• 3 pieces of 4m length rope
• A large container filled with water (3-5 litres)
• A range of objects to distract the group from the task, such as brooms and dustbins.

Essential steps:
1. Mark out a square measuring 3m x 3m and place the container full of water in the middle.
2. Explain to the group that they must remove the container from the square only using the materials provided. They must not reach over into the square. The container must be lifted directly up and away from the square and must not be dragged or pulled across the ground.
3. Divide the group into two teams and give each team two minutes to plan how they might achieve this task.
4. Each group takes it in turns to attempt to achieve the task. The other group can use a range of objects to distract the group from achieving the task.

Once they have achieved the task, gather everyone together to discuss the activity and review what they have learnt. Key issues could include:
• involvement of everyone in decision making and sharing ideas
• identifying skills and experiences
• organising roles and contributions

What are the parallels between this exercise and how the church can meet its own needs?

Trainer’s tip
The container can be removed by running two parallel ropes either side of the bottle, then gently twisting each end of the parallel ropes together so that they tighten round the body of the bottle. This will take a few minutes until the bottle is caught in a tight grip of the twisted ropes. It can then be lifted easily and smoothly off the ground.
Step 2: Bible study

Salt and Light

Read Matthew 5:13-16

Think of ways that you may be able to illustrate this passage visually (e.g., having two foods to taste: one with salt, the other without; putting a candle under a bowl).

1. What are the natural characteristics and uses of salt?

2. What do you think Jesus meant when he said: “You are the salt of the earth”? In what ways do you or your church act as “salt” in the community?

3. What happens when salt loses its saltiness – to the salt and to the things it is used on? What challenge is there for us as the church?

4. What are the uses of light?

5. What does Jesus mean when he says “Let your light shine before men”? In what ways do you or your church act as light in your community?

6. How can your new church initiative help you to be salt and light in your community?

Part 3: Local church initiative

Stage 1: Envisioning and equipping the church

6. What could hold us back?

5. Who do we need on board?

4. What resources do we have?

3. Why do we want to do it?

2. How are we going to do it?

1. What do we want to do?

7. What could get in our way?

6. What could hold us back?

Purpose

This exercise helps the church plan a project in a way that everybody can understand and remember. If possible, try to get someone to draw a bus similar to the picture above and display it somewhere where everyone can see it. Then discuss the questions that surround it. Below are some alternatives that could be used in certain regions where there is no motorised transport.
An example of the minibus exercise

1. **What do we want to do?**
   - Protect our spring so it gives clean water.

2. **Why do we want to do it?**
   - We know clean water keeps us healthy and free from certain diseases.

3. **How are we going to do it?**
   - Call a meeting to plan what we are going to do.
   - Raise funds for cement.
   - Collect materials to build the spring protection.
   - Build a fence to keep animals out.

4. **What resources do we have?**
   - Stones and sand.
   - Small amount of money.
   - People who can work.

5. **Who do we need on board?**
   - Church leaders.
   - Congregation.
   - Community leaders.
   - Livestock owners.

6. **What could hold us back?**
   - Everyone is too busy to give the time.
   - Not enough technical advice.

7. **What could get in our way?**
   - Heavy rain.
   - Conflict within the group.
   - Unresolved issues with livestock farmers.

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### Tips for planning

1. Be clear about the problem you are seeking to address.
2. Check that the group you are working with have sufficient skills, experience and knowledge to undertake the particular project they have chosen. If they do not, then discuss where they could get this additional capacity from.
3. When using the bus exercise, invite everybody to contribute to answering the different questions.
4. If the group is very big, then break it into smaller groups of four to five people to discuss the questions. If there are a lot of answers for each question, ask the group to prioritise the most important answers.

### Action plans

Once you have completed the minibus exercise, use the following table to develop an action plan which can be shared with the whole church.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do we want to do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do we want to do it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are we going to do it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What resources do we have?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What resources are at risk if we overuse them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who do we need on board?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could hold us back?</td>
<td>From starting the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could get in our way?</td>
<td>Once the project has started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When are we going to start?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 3: Local church initiative

Step 4: Set up a small team to run the project

Select people who have time and energy and are motivated to finish the task. This could be the CCG with a few extra people who have got particular skills or interest in the project. Make sure they are clear about the different roles that are required to do the job. Take every opportunity to affirm and encourage them. For more on this see Stage 4: Taking action (pages 133-153).

Step 5: Review how the project went

Use the following questions to review how the project went with the CCG as well as with the wider church. This is a good opportunity for the church to celebrate what they have done and what they have learnt from it.

Part 4: Learning and reflection

This part is important as the church needs to review and reflect back on what has worked well and what could have been done better in the way they have learnt and worked together.

Reflecting on Part 1: Envisioning the church

1. How have the Bible studies and activities helped the church have a vision for its community?
2. Which Bible studies and activities were the most useful and why?
3. What do the church members now feel about their relationship with the community?

Reflecting on Part 2: Using our resources

1. How have the Bible studies and activities helped the church and its members realise the value of using their own resources?
2. What has been the most significant lesson they have learnt from this part?

Reflecting on Part 3: Local church initiative

1. What have the church members learnt from working together to plan and run a project?
2. What could the church do better next time?
3. What do the church members’ experiences of running their own project teach them about how to work with the community in developing other projects?