

# The Capacity Quadrant Model –

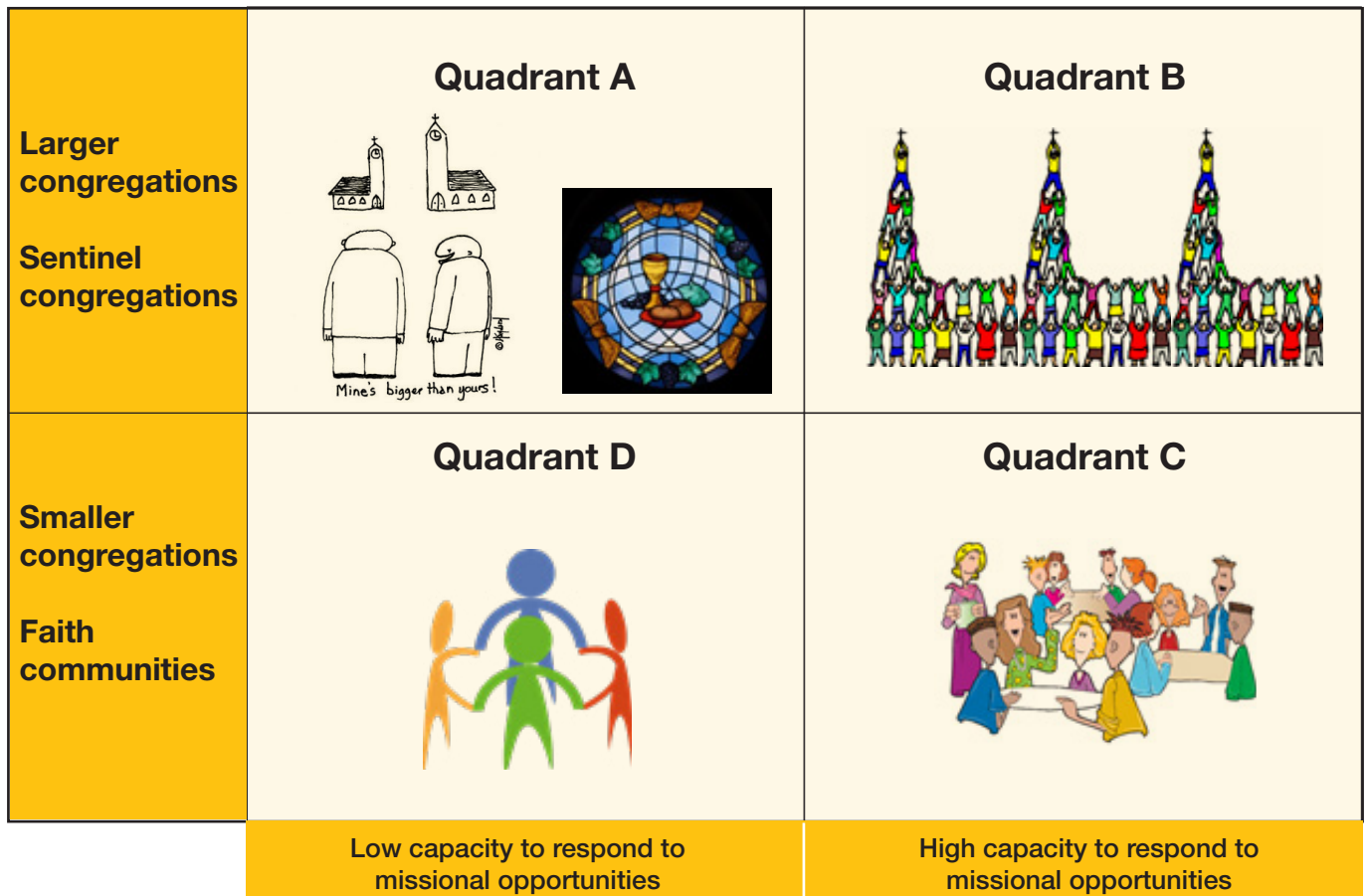
*planning for mission, leadership and congregational life*

by Sharonne Price

Many consultants acknowledge that mission planning is becoming ever more complex. Congregations often feel the need to reach out and be in mission with the community. Some (both consultants and congregations!) find it hard to know where to begin and where to focus their attention. Moreover, navigating the differences and the similarities between congregations can be time-consuming and yield little more than fruitless comparisons.

This model changes the focus to enable us to identify the barriers to effective mission for a congregation and to choose from a range of strategies depending on the size and strength of the congregation, and its capacity to respond to missional opportunities.

This has been the working model for the Pastoral Relations and Mission Planning team of the SA Presbytery/Synod of the Uniting Church for 2015.



**The Model:**

The two variables used here are:

Size/strength of congregations and Low capacity vs. high capacity to respond to missional opportunities, and thus four categories emerge.

Placing a particular congregation in any specific quadrant is a subjective matter and any congregation or faith community may change their place on this model swiftly, sometimes because they have worked hard at developing a strength or capacity, and sometimes because change comes whether we plan it or not! When working with a congregation we often find ourselves “hovering” around a place on the model, always hopeful that with just a little “something” it would change. It often does! Paying attention is sometimes what it takes.

It is our experience that outsiders tend to assess pretty accurately where a particular congregation sits in the model, but what matters most, is where the congregation sees itself.

Capacity usually has three components:

- » Human resources - leadership, volunteers, expertise.
- » Financial resources - either by using extensive reserves from a long history of faithful stewardship or by the willingness of members to give regularly or find “extra mile” funding from deeper pockets.
- » Resources of faithfulness and spirituality – a particular depth of discipleship and discernment; a willingness to trust God and each other; a collaborative generosity, a preparedness to give things up; and listening for the call of the Holy Spirit.

Missional work requires all three, but often we find congregations working with only one of the three.

In our particular context in the UCA in South Australia, the characteristics of the quadrants look like this:

Larger congregations Sentinel congregations	<p><b>Quadrant A</b></p> <p>Congregations on the 80/80/80 /80 rule -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ About 80 regular worshippers</li> <li>✓ Can afford 80% of a stipend</li> <li>✓ 80% are around 70-80 years of age</li> <li>✓ 80% of all effort goes into making worship happen on Sundays</li> </ul> <p>Congregations that have been strong for decades until now, have a site of importance to the Church, and still seek to embody all that it is to be a congregation but are feeling stretched and tired. These churches have more missional ideas and opportunities than they can manage. These congregations closely watch their budget, and have pared it down as much as possible to maintain what they do. These churches are full of faithful disciples who have kept their churches “on track” for decades.</p>	<p><b>Quadrant B</b></p> <p>These congregations are ostensibly our largest and strongest.</p> <p>Characteristics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Multiple leadership that equips and empowers</li> <li>✓ Collaborative and permission-giving culture</li> <li>✓ Capacity to take risks</li> <li>✓ Strength in lay leadership</li> <li>✓ Open structures that allow participation, support and reward to flourish.</li> </ul> <p>These congregations constantly have an outward looking perspective. These congregations have the capacity to plant new congregations, usually in the model of self-replication.</p>
	<p><b>Quadrant D</b></p> <p>These congregations fall into two categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Tending the flame” communities where the purpose remains focused on worshipping God and being a presence so that Christianity remains a living presence in the community.</li> <li>2. Congregations that recognise that when a number of key people die, the congregation is likely to die.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Quadrant C</b></p> <p>Whilst these congregations/faith communities may be small, they have galvanised themselves into a missional focus.</p> <p>These communities may be monastic, missional, discipling or service-orientated. These communities may be grafted onto other congregations in the other quadrants. These communities have a capacity to grow and to replicate themselves as they gain strength and wisdom about their contribution to the work of Christ’s realm.</p>
Smaller congregations Faith communities	Low capacity to respond to missional opportunities	High capacity to respond to missional opportunities

**Quadrant A** churches are in the toughest place. It is easy for a congregation in Quadrant A to slip to Quadrant D and it takes much intentional activity to move a Quadrant A church into Quadrant B.

**Quadrant B** churches may spend all their capacity just trying to stay in Quadrant B. These congregations give much to the denomination.

**Quadrant C** churches have nothing to lose and everything to gain. They may choose to have a short lifespan, or grow into new opportunities for mission.

**Quadrant D** churches face difficult decisions. Some face them positively but others find it just too hard.

The task of the Pastoral Relations and Mission Planning team is to help congregations honestly consider where they might sit

in the model, and then to work with them on building capacity (developing discipleship as expressed by the three capacity builders) as they listen for God's call to mission for them. The mission planning component is focused on

- » Identity
- » Purpose
- » Context

and these too change with the seasons of community life.

**Deeper applications of the model:**

We have found that the model allows us to differentiate the focus of our work with congregations.

**Goal setting and planning approaches** may include:

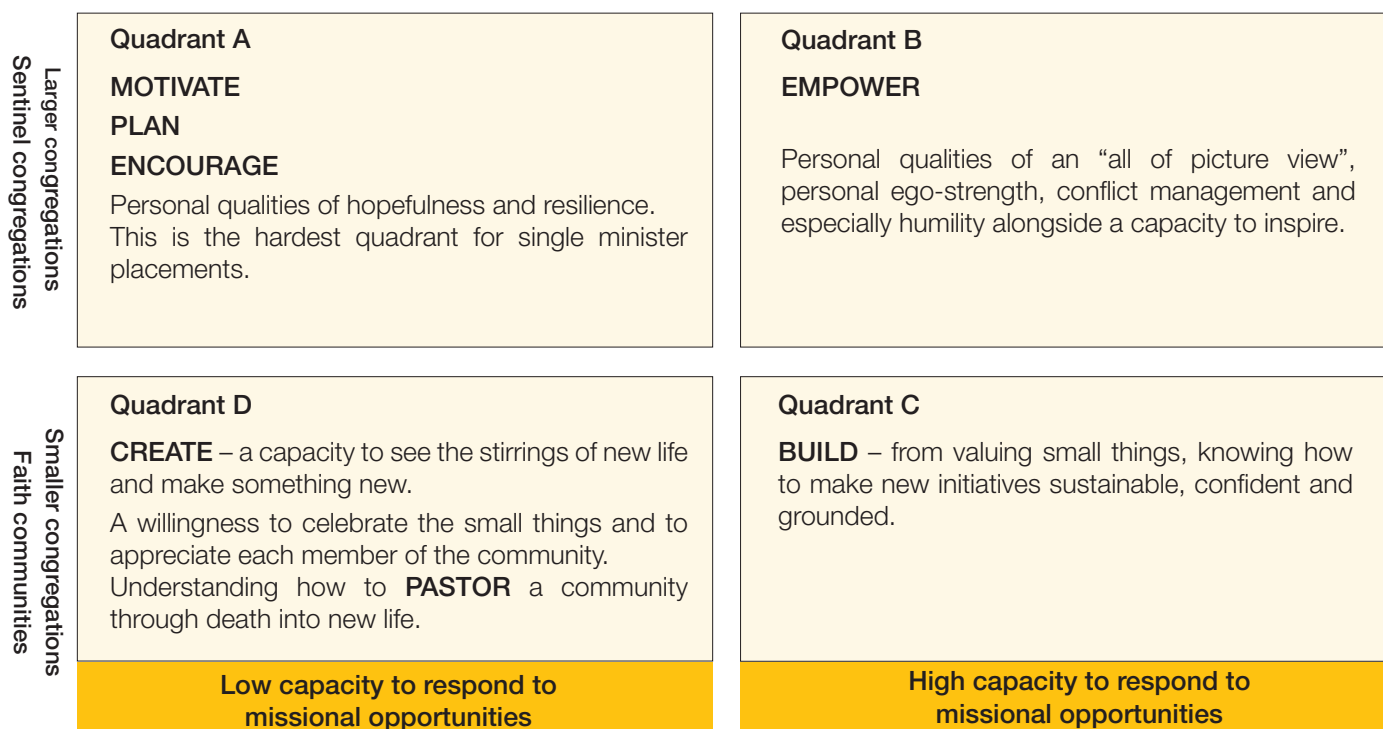
Larger congregations Sentinel congregations	<p><b>Quadrant A</b></p> <p>Asset-based mission planning. Working from strengths. Appreciative enquiry.</p> <p>Effective partnerships with other organisations/churches/communities.</p>	<p><b>Quadrant B</b></p> <p>Getting the structure right. Effective staffing ratios.</p> <p>Leadership and management education.</p> <p>Resourcing and planning help to "nudge" a congregation to the next level of missional engagement.</p>	<p><b>A further vision</b></p> <p>Church planting</p> <p>Supporting very large visions</p> <p>Resourcing other congregations</p>
	<p><b>Quadrant D</b></p> <p>Considering legacy. Rationalising property. Considering how to be a gift to the community.</p> <p>Discerning a future in these circumstances is time-consuming but can achieve surprising results.</p>	<p><b>Quadrant C</b></p> <p>Getting the practices right. Attention to the small, important aspects of community life. Keeping the mission alive and responsive. Short consultations provide encouraging, positive feedback.</p>	<p><b>A further vision</b></p> <p>Becoming a blueprint for other smaller faith communities to follow – even a sort of franchising. Growing to be a congregation.</p>
Smaller congregations Faith communities	<b>Low capacity to respond to missional opportunities</b>	<b>High capacity to respond to missional opportunities</b>	<b>Capacity for new horizons</b>

It is notable that it is important to keep a new vision in view for every congregation, no matter what quadrant it finds itself. God is always about re-creating and re-vitalising the church.

This paper provides the minimum outline of the model. We hope that readers will take time to examine each quadrant and look for what it might have to offer ministry and mission in their own context.

## Leadership strengths

The model offers ways to think about the type of leadership a particular congregation may need if they are to respond faithfully to the call to develop their capacity to respond to missional opportunities. In the diagram below, you will find simple indicators of the type of ministry leader that will help a particular congregation to grow in mission and strength.



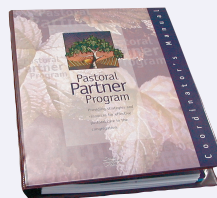
We are still learning what the model has to offer. Amongst its gifts is the opportunity to map our Presbytery, and to consider which quadrants need to be our priorities for limited mission planning resources. It suggests which churches may respond best to the particular gifts of mission planning consultants, and it provides warnings about the dangers and risks to the Church if all our efforts are centred in one quadrant at the exclusion of the others. It suggests priorities for leadership development and appropriate placements.

However, it is but a model. As always, our effectiveness as consultants and as a church will be measured by the faithful discernment of God’s spirit in our midst.



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