

Local Church Review

Theological Introduction

Local Church Review (LCR) is a creative relationship between congregation, Presbytery and the wider community. The Good News of Jesus Christ is made known in the relationship he had with those he met on the journey; it is this meeting and journeying that is central to LCR. In Jesus' relationships, there was transformation: from Zacchaeus in his tree, to the woman threatened with stoning; from the Samaritan Woman at the well, to the night-time meeting with Nicodemus.

LCR offers the opportunity to build an energised relationship between a congregation and a Presbytery where the journeying together in learning about each other becomes a catalyst for transformation and renewal for both. This is done through learning the story of the congregation and discerning the congregation's hopes. It recognises that what is in the past is legacy, as Jesus did with so many of those he met, and invites the congregation to discern where it might be going.

Far from being a cold form-filling and information-gathering exercise, LCR uses these and other methods to create reflective practice within a congregation. Through these means, it then invites the congregation, with the care and partnership of Presbytery and with input about the broader community, to 'go with the life': to seek the places of opportunity and move into the future, not so much with a plan, but with a vision – all the time holding the invitation Jesus gives us to seek out the life and live that life to the full.

It is the three-sided process that takes in the story of the congregation, along with the insights of Presbytery and in partnership with the needs of the local community that makes LCR robust. Yes, administration will be involved; yes there will be form-filling and statistics, as this is often the means by which the church measures the life of congregations, but it is the conversations and discussion that result from that information that makes the process possible. More effectively, however, LCR invites the congregation and Presbytery to reflect on – and affirm – their joint story and discern their call to travel together and shape the future.