
The Bishop's Certificate and Diploma in
Theology for Ministry

Situation Analysis

for Ministry and Mission

Handbook Five

*Spirituality and
Belief Audit*

Name:



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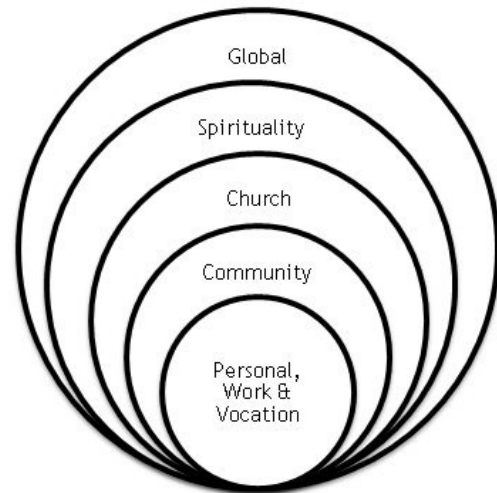
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Introduction to this Handbook

As you embark on your research in this fifth handbook of guided situation analysis, we recommend that you carefully re-read the *General Introduction* provided in the fourth handbook (the *Global Audit*). You can also read the *General Introduction* on the NSTM website.



In the first handbook, the *Personal, Work and Vocational Audit*, of this situation analysis process, you addressed some issues relating to your own life, your work and your vocation. You undertook these exercises as a way of understanding the person you are, what makes you ‘tick’, and the ways that your family background, education and work have contributed to the development of your ‘point of view’.

In the second handbook, the *Community Audit*, we turned our attention to the community in which we live and minister in order to gather data that would aid our understanding of the dynamics which shape it and the issues which confront it, so that we could begin to engage in more relevant forms of mission.

In the third handbook, the *Church Audit*, we focused on the Church, and we attempted to create profiles of our Church as an institution, an agency and a community. Its intention was to help us explore the patterns of ministry and worship in our local congregation in order to help us to enhance both our practice of ministry, our Christian witness and our social concern.

Although our situation analysis process diagram indicates that the fourth handbook should focus on spirituality and the fifth handbook should examine the ways that the global situation impacts upon what we undertake and

experience locally, we have (as you have already discovered) deliberately reversed the order in which these two audits are undertaken in the programme. This was for the very practical reason that it was sensible for you to be undertaking the spirituality and belief audit as you were studying the course which introduces you to contemporary world religions, beliefs and practices.

We decided not to change the diagram because it continues to illustrate what we understand to be the normal process of situation analysis that begins within ourselves and moves outwards into increasingly broader areas and contexts.

So in the fourth handbook, the *Global Audit*, we examined a number of facets of the process of globalisation and the way that our daily lives here in Australia are influenced by events, practices, financial policies, patterns of trade and ideologies which lie beyond our shores.

We are now embarking upon the fifth handbook, the *Spirituality and Belief Audit*.

Although the diagram does not show it, a sixth handbook will follow, focused on *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*. This final handbook is slightly different from the others because it does not introduce a new aspect of the situation analysis process, but instead tries to help participants to consolidate all that they have been learning about critical reflective practice, for future use after the completion of these programmes.

This handbook is normally completed alongside course DM204 on World Religions, which is designed to give you both a general understanding of the role of religious beliefs and spiritualities in a plural world, and to provide an introduction to a few of the major religious traditions which are represented in Australian life today.

In previous years, as a practical exercise in situation analysis, we invited participants to interview adherents of some of the world religions which were represented in their own communities. This proved to be a very difficult

exercise for those who resided in areas where few, if any, world religions other than Christianity appeared to be represented. So we have now revised this handbook in the light of these experiences.

Firstly, for the purposes of this audit, the focus has been changed from the world's major religions, to an examination of the range of beliefs and spiritualities that may be identified in your local neighbourhood.

A number of studies have suggested that while many Australians resist declaring a religious allegiance for census or other purposes, they have an abiding interest in spirituality.

The 2006 Australian census had over 140 different religious categories in the responses received, including *Satanism, nature religion, wiccan/witchcraft, pantheism, rationalism, humanism, Druidism, Animism, atheism* and *paganism*. If you are interested in discovering what the religious statistics are for your local community, you can find the details in the most recent census returns which are available online.

Interestingly, some returns like *Jedi* (the mystical order from the *Star Wars* films) are included in the 'no response' category, on the grounds that people claiming this allegiance may be poking fun at the government or objecting to having to state their religious belief at all. In New Zealand however, where there is a *Jedi Church* (you can find it on the internet) the number of people claiming this allegiance (over 20,000) was greater than the returns for either the Assemblies of God, or the Jehovah's Witnesses!

By looking at this census data, and by discovering what people around you believe, you may discover some interesting spiritualities in your neighbourhood.

Before we start this audit it would be a good idea if you could refresh your memory about the expectations relating to your situation analysis journal, together with the notes on the use of the internet and confidentiality. You will find these after the *General Introduction* in the fourth handbook.

Introducing the Process

There are three major stages in the situation analysis process contained in this handbook.

Stage One

After a couple of initial exercises mapping the territory, you will be asked to design a simple research project. As with the community analysis you undertook in the Certificate programme, you will again be undertaking qualitative (where the data is words) rather than quantitative (where the data is numbers) research. You will be offered a few sample questions as possible guidelines but we will leave it up to you to decide what questions you will ask in your interviews.

Stage Two

Then secondly, you will be asked to identify six people in your neighbourhood who you will interview. It is probably less daunting to ask people you already know if they would mind participating in your research. You will be given a few guidelines as to what kind of people you might approach. You should make notes of interviewees' responses in your situation analysis journal.

Stage Three

The third and final stage will be to process the data that you have collected. This will involve you drafting some tentative conclusions. Having done that, you will need to ensure that one of your local group meetings is dedicated to reflecting upon the data that you have collected, and your draft conclusions. Once you are satisfied with your conclusions you can then write them up in your situation analysis journal.

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graph TD; S1[Stage One: Designing your questionnaire] --> S2[Stage Two: Identifying your interviewees, and conducting your interviews]; S2 --> S3[Stage Three: Reflecting on your data and writing up your conclusions];
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Stage One:
Designing
your
questionnaire

Stage Two:
Identifying
your
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and
conducting
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Stage Three:
Reflecting on
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Session One

MAPPING WORLD RELIGIONS

In this first session of the *Spirituality and Belief Audit* we begin by focusing on world religions in a global perspective. In order to help us to understand the global spread of world religions we are going to engage in two exercises, one focused on a map and the other relating to data on world religions.

We have employed maps already in our situation analysis process (particularly in the *Community Audit*) in order to help us to visually depict data and information that we have been uncovering.

In this session you are being asked to copy or draw a map of the world which indicates the spread of the world's major belief systems.

It is important for us to remember that we have been reminded often throughout this programme that we need to approach the texts that we read and the data that we collect with a critical frame of mind. Insofar as maps are intended to convey information to us, we need to treat them critically as well.

Many of us were educated in an era when maps of the world represented a reality that understood Europe to be at the centre of world (normally depicted in the centre and at the top of our maps), with Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands relegated to the periphery somewhere in a bottom corner. Those maps did not accurately represent reality but rather the map-makers' perception of Europe as the centrepiece of world affairs.

Then in the 1980's a series of new maps were developed in which the nations of the Pacific were central with the northern hemisphere countries assigned to the periphery. This helped us to understand that people's commitments, perspectives and attitudes colour the way in which they represent their world.

We need to be conscious of this as we look for maps that show religious commitment.

In order to complete the first task you will need find an atlas that includes a map of world faiths. If you do not have one of your own you will be able to find one on the internet or in your local library.

There are a number of volumes which contain the information that you will be looking for including *The Oxford Atlas of the World's Religion*, and *The Hammond Atlas of World Religions*, *The Encyclopedia of World Faiths*, and *The Lion Encyclopedia of World Religions*.

If you (or somebody you know and can approach) have access to the Internet, you can use a search engine to look up 'map of world religions'. When we tried this we found four small multi-coloured maps which could be enlarged by clicking on them, and could then be printed out. You might like to also visit the websites of map-makers, such as www.wadsworth.com/religion .

One of the things that you will quickly discover is that the maps that you will find vary enormously. We suggest that you should opt for the map that provides the most detailed breakdown of information on religions.

For example, a map which distinguishes between the two major branches of *Islam*, *Sunni* and *Shi'a*, is better than one which lumps both traditions together.

Similarly a map which indicates the different major Christian traditions is more informative than one which merely identifies areas of the globe as *Christian*; and a map that depicts China as home to *Chinese traditional*

religions (Confucianism and Taoism) is preferable to those that declare China as having “no religion”.

As we have already mentioned, it has been a feature throughout the long history of cartography that some map makers become hosts to their own particular cultural and ideological world views, and their work needs to be approached critically.

As you complete these tasks remember that you can work collaboratively with other members of your parish ministry team or local group.

Please remember to ensure that all of your notes and responses to tasks and questions are included in your situation analysis learning journal.

- 1. Search out a map of the world that indicates the distribution of the major world religions.**

Once you have selected the map that you consider to be most informative, print it out (or copy it in another way). If you do not have access to a colour printer, see if you can find a friend or colleague who does and is willing to print it out for you to include in your learning journal.

- 2. Locate information about the comparative numbers of adherents of the major faith traditions. Some of the maps that you have come across may include tables or pie-charts which indicate the global statistics of religious adherence, if not look for this information from other sources.**

Here again you should try to locate the most informative material. Data which shows the relative numbers of followers of the two major branches of Islam and the major Christian divisions, is more helpful than data which lumps all Muslims, or all Christians together without distinction.

- 3. Locate information that indicates the growth or decline in the number of adherents to the major religions over the past few decades.**

- 4. Once you have collected all of this data and included it in your learning journal, reflect upon what you have discovered and write a summary of your findings in your journal. You may want to address such issues as:**
 - Does anything you discovered surprise you or is the situation much as you expected?**

 - What information was new to you?**

 - What is your general impression about the relative states of major religious traditions?**

 - What does the information tell you about the state of Christian world mission?**

Session Two

SPIRITUALITY AND BELIEF IN AUSTRALIA

This session's reading in course DM204 (on world religions) focused on religious trends in Australia and its author, Philip Hughes, drawing upon national census results and his own research projects, identified four trends:

- Growth in nature religions;
- Growth in charismatic Christian groups,
- Growth in ethnically based religions;
- Growth in those declaring to be of 'no religion'.

Whilst acknowledging that there may be a decline in "*religiosity*" in Australian life, Philip Hughes takes issue with the suggestion that there is at the same time a significant interest in what can be broadly described as "*spirituality*". While this is certainly a trend, Hughes argues that it has been over-emphasised.

This is in contrast to the views espoused by David Tacey, a professor at La Trobe University, who in his books *The Edge of the Sacred* (Melbourne, Harper-Collins, 1995) and *Re-Enchantment: The New Australian Spirituality* (Sydney, HarperCollins, 2000) explores dimensions of the contemporary spirituality phenomenon.

Tacey writes:

Often, what inspires spiritual search in Australia today is a profound disillusionment with the present social system, especially in the fields of politics, social leadership, industry, health, law and education. The search for new values and visions is frequently sparked by frustration, disappointment or anger at the current state of secular society (2000:6).

Tacey includes, among the many areas prompting an interest in spirituality, the experience of nature and landscape, the environmental crisis, Aboriginal reconciliation, the visual arts, popular life-history and story-telling, biography and autobiography, interest in Eastern religions, youth culture, progressives in churches, therapeutic and mental health professions, workplace relations, human resources and industry leadership, social analysis, natural health movement, the men's and women's movements, home gardening, personal and cultural renewal.

It will be interesting to see whether in the community interviews you will be conducting later in this audit, you are able to detect some of these and other factors among people in search for a contemporary spirituality.

This session's task however (having discovered information about the global religious scene) is to identify some current data on beliefs and spirituality in Australia.

Recently a more up-to-date piece of research on religion in Australia was published in March 2011 by the Australian Human Rights Commission. It is entitled *Freedom of Religion and Belief in the 21st Century* and you can find it on the following website: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/frb/index.html#report>

This website has the most recent figures derived from census returns as well as a table indicating changes over the past few decades.

In its concluding section the Report makes the following observations about the religious character of Australia:

The self-definition and religious character of Australia has been and remains a contentious issue, with various voices advocating Australia as a Christian nation, or as a secular nation, or as a multifaith plural nation.

In the past religiosity has been measured by how often one attends church, or observes other aspects of a faith. Many current methods rest on Christian and Protestant assumptions about religion. But many identify with a religion culturally, not necessarily practising that faith in its organised and official contexts.

Greater recognition of a wider range of spiritual communities in Australia, such as pagan and Indigenous beliefs is needed.

Significant distrust of Muslims and Islam was expressed by some, along with reports of discrimination against Muslims and other religious minorities; people of pagan belief reported high levels of prejudice, discrimination and a lack of recognition of their beliefs; there was evidence of prejudice and hostility against gay people, with significant concern about employing gay people, particularly in faith-based schools.

Please complete these exercises in your situation analysis learning journal:

- 5. Locate the most recent statistics you can find indicating the range of religious beliefs in Australia. You will find these in Australian census reports or in the human rights website suggested above.**

As you did in the first mapping exercise, try to find the tables which provide the widest range of data, and then transfer them to your situation analysis learning journal.

- 6. Now try to locate the comparative figures of religious belief in your town or locality. Again these are available from census reports or from the website <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au> where you need to negotiate to the returns on religion, and from there to your town or district as follows:**

On main screen: Select Count Method: choose "Place of Residence"

Select Topic: choose "religion"

Select Data: choose "religious affiliation (full classification list)"

Select Location: (your town or district)

- 7. When you have collected all of this data and included it in your learning journal, reflect upon what you have discovered and write a summary of your findings in your journal.**

Session Three

CONSTRUCTING YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE

So far in this handbook we have concentrated our attention on discovering what we can about the data that other people have already collected, and then reflecting upon what we have learnt from it.

In this third session of the audit we now begin to turn to the process through which we will be uncovering our own data about the spirituality and beliefs of people who live in our neighbourhood.

Over the coming sessions we will be using a questionnaire to interview people for the purpose of finding out whether they are committed to a particular tradition, and (whether they are or not) what they believe.

When we were developing this handbook we wondered about whether it would be preferable to provide participants with the questionnaire to be used in these exercises.

One advantage of having a common questionnaire would have been the possibility of then comparing responses across the different regions of the Diocese.

However, given the very different contexts in which participants in this programme live and work, we decided that it would be preferable for each participant to develop their own questionnaire, with their local neighbourhood in mind.

So, constructing the questionnaire that you will be using for your interviews needs careful thought. Remember that you are undertaking qualitative research (which is interested in words and descriptions), and not quantitative research (which analyses numbers).

As you think about the kinds of questions that you would like to ask people in your neighbourhood about their spirituality and beliefs it is important to remember two things:

- Firstly, you are wanting people to talk about their attitudes to and experience of spirituality. This means that, in the case of people who are committed to a religious tradition, you will be more interested in their personal perspectives, than the ‘authorised beliefs’ which they are expected to follow; and in the case of people who claim not to be a member of a religious tradition, you will nevertheless try to uncover the spiritual ideas that they informally connect with.
- Secondly, you are NOT going to be using this questionnaire to interview more than one member of your local congregation or any other Church in your local area.

You will want to select questions that are deliberately open-ended so that respondents can reply in a number of ways depending on their experience and their outlook, rather than simply stating ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Your questionnaire should aim to:

- Make people feel comfortable, not intruded upon;
- Use open-ended questions;
- Avoid leading questions which suggest an answer;
- Ask one thing in each question;
- Use simple words.

We offer the following suggestions as a starting point for you as you design your own questions which will be relevant to your context:

- Would you describe yourself as a religious (or spiritual) person?
- Do you belong to a particular religious group (or tradition)?
- How would you describe your spirituality?
- Can you identify your spirituality by name?
- What sustains your spirituality?
- Do you have a sacred book, if so how does it help you to understand your spirituality?
- Is it important for you to meet with other people who share your beliefs or practices, if so, are you able to do this locally?
- What are your main spiritual practices?
- What will happen to you when you die?
- Do you follow a particular calendar, cycle or pattern of observing time, if so describe it?
- If you belong to an organised religion, can other people join it, and if so how?
- What are the ways in which you worship?
- Do you pray, and if so how do you think your prayer will change things, if at all?
- How does your spirituality relate to your life in the local community?

We suggest that your questionnaire should be kept as simple as possible, with **a maximum of eight questions** to elicit the information that you are looking for.

While it is recommended that you limit your survey questions to a maximum of eight questions, you may need to have a greater number of questions in readiness, so that you can easily adapt to an interviewee's circumstances.

If for example, you encounter a person who is a member of one of the world's major faiths (such as a Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist for example), you will need some specific questions like *How do people join?*, *What forms does your worship take?*, etc.

If the person you are interviewing does not have a background in organised religion, you will need to use more general questions.

Please complete these exercises and write them up in your learning journal:

- 8. Construct your questionnaire by developing no more than eight open-ended questions.**
- 9. Reflect upon the questions that you have chosen, and write about how you selected them and any difficulties that you encountered in thinking about questions that would be suitable for your local context.**
- 10. Prepare a list of six friends or neighbours that you will ask to be interviewed.**

Remember that the goal of this research is to get information about the range of spiritualities in your local community, and so therefore no more than one of the people who you select can be a member of a Church.

Where possible try to locate a mixture of people who are members of other religious traditions (Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews) or whose spirituality you are unaware of, but who are not practicing Christians.

11. **Decide how you are going to record people's responses during the interviews.**

If you have a portable recording device you could make use of that; but transcribing interviews on to paper can be a laborious and sometimes frustrating process. The alternative is to make brief notes during the interview to prompt your memory of what was said when you come to write up your conclusions.

12. **Seek approval for the use of your questionnaire from your local group leader following discussion about it at a local group meeting.**

IMPORTANT: It is very important that you do not use your questionnaire without having received approval from your local group leader for the questions that you have developed.

If there is a practical problem relating to obtaining approval because of the timing of local group meetings please contact the Director of the School before using your questionnaire.

Session Four

YOUR PILOT INTERVIEW

Now that you have produced your questionnaire it is time for you to test out how effective it is.

You will be selecting one of the people that you listed in your learning journal as a potential interviewee, interviewing them and then reflecting on whether your questionnaire needs to be revised before it is used with the other five people that you have selected.

At the start of the interview you will need to explain to the person that you are doing some research about spirituality in Australia as part of this programme and that you would appreciate them responding to a few questions about their own spirituality.

It would be a good idea to explain to them:

- What you will be doing with the notes that you take (or the recording) of the interview;
- That they will not be identified by name in your learning journal;
- That they can opt not to respond to a question if they choose to do so.

You are not expected to have a long conversation with the interviewee, perhaps half an hour to forty minutes, but if the interviewee wants to pursue the conversation, you might allow it to continue a little longer.

If you live in a small town and you are one of a number of participants in the programme please ensure that you compare lists of names so that you are not all approaching the same people to interview them. This could be very frustrating for the interviewee!

Remember that you must not proceed with the pilot interview until your questionnaire has been approved by your local group leader.

Please complete these exercises and write them up in your learning journal:

- 13. Choose the person that you plan to interview and conduct the interview.**
- 14. After the interview (and when you are back home) take some time to reflect upon your initial interview. You might focus and make notes on the following issues:**
 - How do you think the interview went?**
 - What were the problem areas?**
 - How can these be fixed?**
 - Did your interviewee have any suggestions to make for improvement?**
- 15. In the light of this review, do you want to make any changes in either your interviewing technique, or the questions you posed? If so detail these in your learning journal (if you are proposing to make substantial changes to your questions, please contact your local group leader).**

Sessions Five to Nine

INTERVIEWS

During the next five sessions (five to nine) you will be conducting one interview each session using your questionnaire, and writing up the notes from each interview in your learning journal.

Remember to ensure that the name and identity of each of your interviewees is not revealed in your notes.

During this period you will also need to write up the notes from your pilot interview.

Session Ten

REFLECTING ON YOUR DATA

Now that you have completed all six of your interviews it is time to reflect upon the data that you have gathered about spirituality and belief in your local neighbourhood.

Please complete these exercises and write them up in your learning journal:

16. Carefully read through the notes that you have made of the six interviews.
17. Develop a table such as this illustration and add a very brief summary of the data from each of the interviews so that you can easily compare it.

	Int. 1	Int. 2	Int. 3	Int. 4	Int. 5	Int. 6
Q. 1	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response
Q. 2	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response
Q. 3	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response
Q. 4	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response	Summary of Response

- 18. Develop a list of the themes that you can detect emerging from the responses (if you can detect several major themes common to the responses group these together)?**

- 19. Write a summary of the tentative conclusions that you can draw from the data from your research.**

Session Eleven

REFLECTING WITH YOUR LOCAL GROUP

In this session you will be presenting your data and your tentative conclusions with members of your local group.

Sharing your initial conclusions with others is an important element in the process of conducting social surveys because we sometimes become so absorbed in the task that we may overlook some things that have been said which are of real significance.

People who have not been engaged in your research project may be able to pick up themes in the data that you have collected that you have not seen.

You will need to prepare for the local group meeting, listen carefully to the responses and advice that you receive from others at the meeting, and then reflect on what you have discovered after the meeting has concluded.

Please write up your reflections on these aspects of the process in your learning journal:

- 20. Present the data that you have collected, the key themes that you have detected, and the initial conclusions that you have come to at a local group meeting and invite responses from the other members of the group.**
- 21. Make notes of any new issues or suggestions raised by the group and after the meeting write these up in your learning journal.**

Session Twelve

WRITING UP YOUR CONCLUSIONS

In this final session of the handbook, at the end of the audit process, you are being invited to write up the final conclusions that you are drawing from the data that you collected in your research.

Remember that the focus of this research project has been the spirituality and belief of your neighbours, and so this should also be the focus of your conclusions.

Remember too, not only what you have observed and reflected upon, but also what you have learned from other members of your local group.

You should write up these conclusions in your own way, presenting your findings, and commenting on the process. If you need some guidance, some of the matters you could typically choose to address are:

- Were there any difficulties that you encountered in undertaking this work?
- If so, how did you resolve them?
- What are the main things you have learned from this exercise?
- Was there anything unexpected or surprising to you?
- What is the major conclusion that you can draw from your research?
- Did your project throw any light on the contention that there is a decrease in '*religiosity*' but a rising interest in spirituality in Australia?

- What are one or two of the implications for Christian mission in your locality?

Please complete this exercise in your situation analysis learning journal in about 500 words:

Write a brief concluding report on your research project, its findings and your conclusions.

You need to bring your situation analysis journal to the session at the next learning weekend so that you can discuss it with your fellow participants.

Please therefore do not submit your situation analysis journal to your local group leader until after the learning weekend.