



MISSION ACTION PLANNING

Mission and Ministry The Diocese of Edmonton

Introduction

Mission Action Planning is a tried and tested way of putting flesh on to what we say of ourselves as a Church and Parish, exploring our strengths and the challenges that face us, and putting together a realistic plan for the way forward that God is calling us to.

There is no one 'correct' way of producing a Mission Action Plan (MAP), but there are a number of important considerations for a MAP to be of use to a parish, rather than just a collection of grand ideas. This leaflet offers basic guidelines on Mission Action Planning.

Mission Action Planning is integral to strategic planning and delivery of effective mission and ministry by parishes in the Diocese of Edmonton. Every parish is actively encouraged to have an up to date MAP. The Diocese is currently developing strategies to support and encourage Mission Action Planning.

Mission Action Plans are regarded as prime documents for those involved in the support and development of parochial ministry. An up to date Mission Action Plan will be key in the offering of such support and development work.

Many parishes include Mission Action Planning (or equivalent) as an ordinary part of parish life. The sole Diocesan involvement in the process for many will simply be to receive copies of the MAP.

I hope that every parish will move toward having their own living Mission Action Plan. Mission Action Plans are used by churches to focus on the priorities that they have set for themselves. They will also be used in the assessment of every church's health and used as a tool in clergy development programmes.

What is a Mission Action Plan?

The aim is for this to be an organic document, expressing your church's DNA. As a working tool it should also grow and change as your work for the Kingdom in your particular locale develops.

Mission Action Plans vary widely from parish to parish depending on whether it is the first or fourth Mission Action Plan for a church; the size of the church, its location and church tradition. Some examples are available at www.london.anglican.org/MAP. One crucial factor in preparing a Mission Action Plan is that it should be an activity which has the widest possible involvement across your congregation.

Where do we start?

Parish Profile: describe as many aspects of your church as possible such as: styles of worship; a profile of the people who come; church school; church resources; activities within the church.

Community Audit: compile a profile of your neighbourhood. Include information about local organisations and amenities. Use Census data to profile the population. Plot the demography of your Parish on a map.

Envisioning Exercise: brainstorm with as many people as possible to come up with new ideas and ventures. Be bold – don't worry about practicalities at this stage.

SWOT Analysis: Take the ideas from the envisioning exercise and consider the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for each one. This will help you to think realistically about what might be possible. Remember to include financial and buildings considerations in the process.

Resources: Consider what people and skills will be needed to accomplish your objectives. Will local partners need to be involved? Who in the church community might take this forward? What else might be needed?

Prioritise: Divide your ideas into three categories – 'Quick Wins': things that can be introduced and make an impact quickly. 'Medium range': things that will require preparation. 'Long range': things which will need an investment of significant time and resources.

SMART Checklist: Make sure all your objectives are Specific and Stretching, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Realistic as well as Time bound and Timely.

Draft: Prepare a MAP which sets out your parish priorities and how you intend to achieve them. Be sure this is a collaborative activity so the whole congregation has 'ownership' of the plan.

Launch: Celebrate your vision with your community; both churchgoers and those groups and people who have links with your church.

Once prepared and underway, it is vital that the implementation of the Mission Action Plan is monitored both for what goes right and what goes wrong.

Review the Plan regularly. Make sure that subject areas within it are placed on vestry agendas for discussion. Give regular feedback to church members and arrange an occasion when the whole congregation can review the plan once a year and agree on any modifications.

AND FINALLY remember that this is not a 'tablets of stone' exercise, nor is it a box-ticking exercise. A Mission Action Plan is a practical document, constantly in use and developing organically with the inevitable movements in the life of you Parish.

Although I, as your Bishop, would like to have a copy, you are undertaking this exercise for the life and vitality of your parish, and not for anyone's filing cabinet!

Further Resources

There is a growing mine of resources for Mission Action Planning on the Diocesan of London Website, at www.london.anglican.org/MAP; do have a look around these. There are also more resources referred to there.

Good practical handbooks to assist the process include:

The Healthy Churches' Handbook by Robert Warren

Mission Shaped Church and *Moving on in a Mission shaped Church The Road to Growth* by Bob Jackson

There are also plenty of Webbased resources available, including:

www.freshexpressions.org.uk

www.freshexpressions.ca

where you can look at what other parishes are doing

www.faithworks.info

where you can find a catalogue of resources and online facilities to use in Mission Action Planning