

By God's grace, to grow God's Kingdom in Cumbria
Seeing our churches growing disciples of all ages

- ❖ Maturity in faith *which leads to*
- ❖ Prayer and Worship *which is expectant and lively*
- ❖ Community service and engagement *looking outwards*
- ❖ Evangelism *to share the good news*
- ❖ Quality of relationships *revealing love for one another*

Va Mission Action Planning Conducting a Review

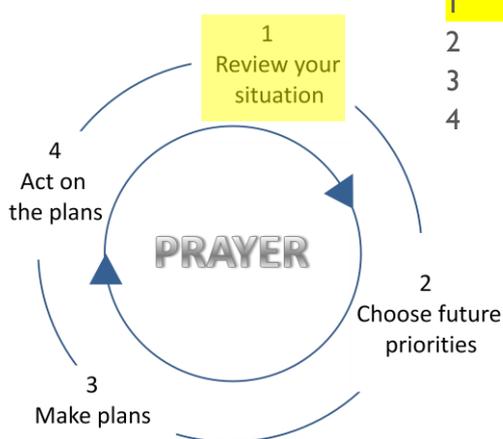
FIRST OF ALL ... a reminder of the main thing. The main thing is always the main thing and that is PRAYER. Somehow you have to get as many of your people as possible praying for the way ahead. Encourage PCC members to write prayers and put them up somewhere where people can add their own. Consider a regular prayer gathering for church members to come together to pray out loud or in silence or in some other creative way (recall some of the examples given on the 'ExploreMore' session ... hopefully these will be on the 'Vision to Action' part of the website very soon!) The aim is to get everyone focused on the vision and where you are going together as you seek, by God's grace, to grow God's Kingdom in the bit of Cumbria you are focused on! Make sure the intercessions each week include a prayer for the future of the church in the local community ... and whenever possible remind people to pray and talk together about what God might be doing among us as you seek His way forward for the church. Find a few ways that enable people to feedback their thoughts and words from their prayer times – individual and corporate. If you aren't the creative thinker in your church, find someone who is who will probably enjoy heading up the prayer and listening process and will find easy ways to engage others in the journey.

*Generous God,
you call us to follow you
and send us out
to make more disciples.*

*By the grace of your Holy Spirit,
may we grow to your glory
and the flourishing of your Kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Amen

THE MAP CYCLE



1	REVIEW	Where are we now? <i>Listen & Review</i>
2	PRIORITISE	Where are we going? <i>Vision & Priorities</i>
3	PLANNING	What's the best way to get there? <i>Strategy & Plans</i>
4	ACTION	What do we need to do now? <i>Action & Celebration</i>

The REVIEW stage comes up each year – and I suggest that you try to do this at some point in the weeks leading up to your Annual Church Meeting so that some sort of report can be given celebrating what has been going on and pointing towards the priorities and plans for the year ahead.

If you are now embarking on the review to begin your Mission Action Plan for the next three years and not simply reviewing the MAP at the end of year one or two, then here is my suggestion for the best way to do an initial review which asks the two key questions: **Where are we now** and **where are we going?**

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

This is the honest assessment bit! Remember this is not just about how we do what we do in the building it's about how we are getting on with the work of the Kingdom – being the disciples of Jesus – in our local community. Ideally we need everyone in our church involved in this review ... and as many others from the local community as possible.

Prepare for your review day

If you want to be really thorough in your preparation you can undertake a church audit and a community audit. Both involve quite a bit of hard work and need volunteers to distribute and collect short questionnaires from members of the community as well as

church members. I am working on simplified versions but if you want to see the full thing, you will find them on the 'Faithworks' website at <http://www.faithworks.info/research-and-resources-/resources> and you can get a copy for about £4 each (pdf format)

Set a date to gather together

Set it for at least six weeks ahead and, if possible, set it up somewhere other than the usual place in your church, hall or school. It's good to get away somewhere special together – it doesn't need to be too far (best if it isn't) but make sure it is warm and comfortable with good facilities for refreshments. It's best to take the main part of a day for this exercise (10am–3pm with refreshment and lunch breaks) but it is possible to do it in half a day (9.30am–1pm with a refreshment break). If you are confined to evenings then try to get two very close together so that people don't lose the thread of the review. If you do have to use two evenings then it might be difficult to get offsite for the two sessions – you will have to make a reasonable call on this. But, find someone now who can manage the organisational details for this day (or the two evenings) and let them take the responsibility for sorting transport, refreshments, liaison with the venue, etc.

Multi-benefice gathering

It is quite possible to do this day with the various churches in the benefice/cluster/team! It is most likely that lots of it will overlap but there will, of course, be some things that are specific to one of the churches and not particularly relevant to the others. There will be time in the day for people to divide into their church groups. Ultimately we are looking for a MAP which can be owned either wholly or in part by each church. Obviously, it is important for each church to have a MAP that it is working to even if this is part of a bigger plan owned by the whole benefice/cluster/team. From here on, the word 'church' covers all these options!

Invite everyone

Big posters, a highlighted notice in the notice sheet, postcard invites (like those ones you send out when a new vicar is being licensed!) a mention in every service, and get it into every sermon you preach every week before the great Day Away. Basically, use every tactic you can to get as many people as possible to gather together for the review.

Now get everyone talking

Now you can start the preparation work with the church, making sure that everyone gets engaged in understanding the vision and the journey you are embarking on together to grow disciples and extend the Kingdom of God where you are. Make sure the Diocesan Vision is displayed around the church and that everyone has their own copy. If you are conducting either or both of the audits, make sure everyone is aware and informed. These exercises cause a lot of chat and interest in the local community!

Focusing hearts and minds

If you have not done so already, devote a Sunday to going through the Diocesan vision with your church members – you can adapt your usual Sunday worship services to enable a good half an hour for this. If you do want to use Lent as the preparation period then you could use the Lent Course designed for this purpose in 2011. You can download it from the diocesan website: <http://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/discipleship/disciples-together-course.html>

Facilitating the day

If there is someone in your church who is a good facilitator – maybe they do this sort of thing as part of their job or just have a natural flair for this sort of thing – then ask them to help you lead the review. Sharing the leading and facilitating of the day will help people to talk and share better ... and helps explode the idea that the Vicar does everything. If you are struggling to find someone to help you with this role then try to get a churchwarden or a member of the PCC to at least open up one of the sessions and explain what it will be about before they hand back to you. The aim is to make sure it doesn't all revolve around you!

Things you need for the Review

Flipchart and Pens

5 'Marks' posters

Post-it notes (2 colours)

Paper and pens

Blutac

Really good refreshments!

Beginning the day

Before people arrive, get the room ready. Make sure it is conducive to people sharing together – so use 'horse-shoe' shapes of seating. Round the room have 5 'Marks' posters. These are pieces of flip chart paper each with the heading of one of the marks of the diocesan vision. Put pens and paper on each chair together with a copy of the green 'Growing Disciples' booklet and five yellow post-its and five pink post-its.

People to help

- A Facilitator
- Refreshment team
- Flipchart scribbler
- Note taker (not minutes!)
- 5 Post-it sorters/reporters

Have some sort of opening prayer/worship together – this can be short, creative ... and, again, preferably not led by you! After this, you can give an overview of the day and tell people what the aim is and what the various timings are, etc. Then you can introduce the Facilitator (or helper!) and get them to introduce and/or lead session one.

Session 1. What's going on? (45 mins to an hour)

The opening exercise gets people to think about what is going well and not-so-well in the life of the church and the community. If this is a multi-benefice group it is quite good to do

this exercise with someone from another church in the group – but at this early stage in the day they might prefer the security of talking to someone they know.

1. Invite people in two's or three's to come up with a few things they think are going really well in the life of the church. Give them 5 minutes for this. Go round the groups and just get them to call out a few of their answers. It is not necessary to record the answers on the flipchart but it is probably a good idea for someone to scribble down the answers to put in the notes of the meeting at the end of the whole day.
2. Now repeat the exercise for things people think are not going so well in the life of the church.
3. Now repeat the whole exercise again but this time get people to think about the *parish or community* the church serves rather than the church itself. So the question is what is going well in the life of the community and what is not.
4. Next, either you or someone else points out the five 'Marks' posters around the room and summarises (really summarise!) what each one covers – see the explanation in the 'Growing Disciples' booklet – and then invite people to wander round to each poster and write one thing on one of their yellow post-it notes that records something the church is already doing in that area. Beware, as some people complain that they need to write more than one thing! So, have some more post-its available for them to use – but try to encourage people to just put down one thing. In a multi-benefice gathering get people to put an abbreviation of the name of their church at the top of the post-it.
5. Give time for people to wander around and see what others have written and encourage general chat and comment.
6. Take a refreshment break!

Session 2. The SWOT test (45 mins to an hour)

Quite a few of us have done these tests during the 'Growing Healthy Churches' exercise ... but don't be wary of doing it again. Things move and change (even in the church!) and this is always a good exercise to do when undertaking a review. Get the Facilitator to take over and remind people that 'Strengths' are those things we do well whilst 'Weaknesses' are those things we either don't do or find hard to do. 'Opportunities' are those things we think we could step out and do, and 'Threats' are those things which might stop us taking up the opportunities.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

1. Get people into groups of four to six and ask them to come up with a couple of things for each section (takes about 10-15 minutes). Then gather everyone back together and go round the groups recording the answers on the flip chart. The best way to do this is to record all the 'strengths' first, then the 'weaknesses' and so on, giving one sheet of paper to each. Stick the four pieces of paper up somewhere so everyone can see them.
2. Encourage comment and feedback from the whole group. How are people feeling? What is exciting or unnerving them?
3. If this exercise has been led by the Facilitator, give them a break while you take the lead and give some silence for prayer and reflection. You could put in a meditation or reflection at this point focusing on trust in God and faith for the future.

This is the point to break for lunch if you are doing the day ... or go home if you are doing the first evening session!

During lunch (or before the next evening session) get the 5 "post-it sorters" to take one each of the five 'Marks Posters' and do their best to group the yellow post-its together in common themes – this makes it easier for the next exercise.

Session 3. What do we see? (45 mins to an hour)

Introduce this session with focus on vision – ie. what we see ahead. Maybe give a short Biblical reflection and invite people to pray for God's guidance as they think of the future of the church in their community. Hand back to the Facilitator for the next bit.



1. Now for part two of the great post-it exercise! Remind everyone what we did in the first part of – recording on yellow post-its what we felt we were addressing in each of the 'marks' of the vision. This time, get everyone to use their pink post-its in each 'mark' but this time writing anything they would like to see happening in that area in the future. Again, give time for people to wander around and read what others have written.
2. Get people back into their groups of four to six (the group they did the SWOT exercise with) and get them to imagine that they are preparing the main article for a local newspaper in three years time! The main article concerns their church and what is happening. It's front page news! What does the group want the headline to say? What sort of things would the article cover and what would the reporters be saying. Give a good 15 minutes to this exercise and then get each group to report back giving their headline first followed by the main things the article would cover. Get your 'note taker' to make notes of each of the headlines and the main article points for the write up at the end.
3. Take a break!

During the break get the "post-it sorters" to repeat the grouping exercise they did before but this time grouping the pink post-its together in common themes. In the next session each sorter will need to report back on the key themes are in both the yellow and pink categories!

Session 4. What looks like a priority? (45 mins to an hour)

Introduce this session assuring everyone that you are nearly there with the review. Tell everyone that this is now the careful listening stage. Listening to the reports from each of the people standing by the 'marks' but also listening to God who whispers in our ears and prompts our minds and quickens our hearts. Give some silence for people to prepare and pray for this last bit.

Now, with each "post-it sorter" standing by their 'mark', ask them to give the main themes for each of the yellow and pink post-its. It's probably worth reminding people that the yellow post-its refer to what is going on in the life of the church in each of those areas and the pink ones refer to what we would like to see happening. As each report is given either record it on the flipchart (if you are not flipcharted-out!) or ask the note taker to record it for the write-up.

Now get people to meet for the last time in their group of four to six people and decide between them what they think are the two or three most important things that have arisen. These may be things to strengthen and develop or they may be new things to embark on. Now ask each group to report back and write up the answers on the flipchart. Do not repeat anything (ie. if a group repeats what another group has already said, don't write it down again).

Conclusion

You will now have an indication of the key things you want to form part of your MAP. Remind everyone that you are looking for a few things to focus on in this first MAP (2012-14) and that now is the time to pass the results of this review to a group of people who will work on pulling it together into a simple plan with a few priorities. This could be a specially elected group or a sub group of the PCC or even a group representing each church from the mission cluster.

Tell everyone that the review will be written up (probably best for you and the Facilitator to do this once you have the notes from the note taker. Ask the note-taker to check the various flipchart sheets for any extra bits that might need to be included.

Get this out as soon as possible and make sure that the PCC(s) discuss it very soon afterwards and appoint the MAPing group to get on with it! This group should include those people willing to head-up and take the lead in each of the priorities. It's best if these are lay people who have the respect of church and community. They each need to form a team of people who are going to help get the priority into action with the committed and prayerful help of the whole church.

Keep the MAP high up in the minds, hearts and bodies. Keep praying and celebrate as you take steps forward and see God doing amazing things among you.