

MISSION ACTION PLANNING

The Planning Process - a Summary

1. Wide Involvement

Get as many of the congregation as possible involved in the process:

Prayer: The planning needs to be surrounded by prayer. Ultimately, we are seeking God's plan rather than just inventing our own. Issue prayer cards, have an evening of prayer, ask house groups to include it regularly in their prayer times.....

Communication: If the plan is to be 'owned' by the whole Church they need to know what is happening at each stage. Regular updates in magazine, notice sheets etc.

Questionnaire: It is recommended that a questionnaire is given to each member of the congregation at an early stage in the planning. The basis of this is 'How would you like this Church to be in five years' time?' This might be 'things we ought to be doing' or 'what it feels to be part of it'. You could even ask, 'How would Jesus like this Church to be in five years' time?'

A sample questionnaire is included with this paper. It originates from Wellington, Shropshire, and versions of it have already been used by a number of parishes.

2. Crossing boundaries

It is assumed that the basic unit for planning is the parish. However, we are encouraged to think how we might co-operate across boundaries. In a benefice, can the plans be brought together so that some of the work can be done in common. Or could you start with a benefice plan which also takes account of the needs of the different Churches?

Can we share projects or training with neighbouring benefices, or with other denominations working in our area?

3. The Working Group

Detailed work on the plan is best done by a small Working Group, which reports back to the PCC. (In a parish with a small PCC, the group could be the PCC, but they are recommended to have separate planning meetings. Do not risk the planning process being 'squashed' by trying to fit it in with the rest of an ordinary agenda.)

The incumbent (or other clergy) might or might not be on this group, but certainly should not produce the plan on their own. The lay contribution is essential.

4. Preparatory Work

The Working Group will analyse the responses from the questionnaires.

It might also be helpful to list all the work already being done, and by whom; and the range of skills and gifts already in evidence.

Such an audit might even reveal things which have served their purpose, and could be dropped!

5. Mission Statement

If you do not already have a Mission Statement, it might be helpful to formulate one. Its aim is to summarise why it matters that **this** Church is **here**.

Why does God want us to continue?

What is our mission to our local community?

6. Vision Statement

It might also help to have a Vision Statement.

This answers the questions, 'What sort of Church do we need to be if we are to fulfil our Mission Statement?' In shaping our priorities, what changes and growth do we need to see?

Diocese of Carlisle : Vision and Strategy 2011 - 2020

In this document the Mission Statement of the diocese is given as:

By God's grace, to grow God's Kingdom in Cumbria.

And the Vision Statement is:

To see our Churches growing disciples of all ages.

7. Priorities

Decide on three or four priorities, which you hope to work on in the next three years.

Try not to let the list of priorities get longer unless you are sure you have the people to carry them out. Some projects might need a longer time-scale, say up to five years, but can be included in the plan for the first three years.

Remember the five areas of discipleship in the Diocesan Vision:

Maturity in faith;

Expectant prayer and lively worship;

Community service and engagement;

Evangelism;

Quality of relationships.

You won't cover all of these, but your priorities should relate in some way to one or more of them.

The PCC should agree to these priorities, and the whole congregation be kept informed. (Perhaps an on-going display in Church can be used to report progress.)

*Don't forget: we are looking for **mission**, not maintenance. Don't include things the PCC ought to be doing anyway, unless you are trying some new or expanded way of doing them which makes them relevant to mission.*

8. Actions

When the main priorities have been agreed, the Working Group will need to set out the various actions which will bring them about - perhaps a few different actions for each priority. Apply the SMART test: are they Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Resourced, Timed? Some Churches have found a chart like this helpful:

Priority	Action	Who will do it?	Date for completion	Resources required
1.	a			
	b			
	c			
	d			
2.	a			
	b			
	c			

9. Review

The Working Group will probably need to meet from time to time to review progress. It is certainly recommended that there should be an annual review, perhaps by the PCC:

How are we doing?

Is there anything we want to delete or change?

Are any projects completed?

Have any run into problems?

Is the resourcing proving adequate?

Do we want to add any new priorities?

For example:

Priority 1. might be to improve the welcome for people arriving at a service.

Action a. Create more space inside the door.

Action b. Improve the lighting in this area.

Action c. Design information boards

Action d. A display in the porch to introduce the day's theme and catch people's interest.

Resources for a. & b. might include a faculty, new furniture and lighting.

c. & d. will need people with artistic skills.

a. could include training for sides-people so that good use is made of the space.

The original of this questionnaire was used in Wellington, Shropshire, by Mark Ireland, one of the authors of the book 'Mission Action Planning'. It has been amended to take account of multi-parish benefices; also to give respondents the opportunity to discuss their ideas.

The original also included a question along the lines of 'How would Jesus like this Church to be in five years' time?' but (unsurprisingly) the replies were generally similar to respondents own hopes and preferences.

The Benefice of Upper Dale with Tarnside

MISSION ACTION PLANNING

[In a multi-parish benefice:]

The Church I usually attend / the Church I am answering about is:

St Margaret _____

St Lawrence _____

St Felix _____

Think about how you would like this Church to be in five years' time.

It could be 'what it feels like to be part of it' or 'these are things we ought to be doing'.

Write up to four words or phrases which express the most important parts of your conclusions.

1. *Some people have said they found this too open-ended, too difficult to express their ideas.*
2. *It could be done in **multiple-choice form**, giving people a number of questions and inviting them to choose one or more options for each.*
3. *However, it is generally felt that the composition of the questions and options would limit the imagination of the respondents and could be too dependent upon the ideas and views of those forming the questionnaire.*
- 4.

What **resources** (people, equipment, skills) might be needed to bring these about?

What would you consider are **your own** top skills and / or interests?

(This is to gain an idea of our spread of abilities, not simply to give you more work!)

Please bring this back to Church, or return it to Mary Cross, by 7 August.

It can remain anonymous, but if you would like to discuss any of your ideas, please put your name below: