



The Diocese of  
**Southwark**



# Mission Action Planning

## A 'how to' guide

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Walking | Welcoming | Growing

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# An Introduction



Our culture and society are rapidly changing but God is always present through his Church in every time and place. Sometimes we struggle as churches to demonstrate the credibility of our faith to the wider world and to adapt to changes that our societies

and communities undergo. Although the world may be changing, God's nature as a 'sending God' is not. The root of the word 'mission' is 'sending', which intimates movement, God's movement towards the world he loves. It has been said that 'it is not the church of God that has a mission. It is the God of mission that has a Church'. So how can local churches, empowered by prayer and the Holy Spirit, join in with the God of mission? This booklet aims to help us think about this question.

Mission Action Planning is a reflective process for a church to discover what God is calling it to be. It is not meant to be a 'one size fits all' approach. Rather, it is meant to be a journey of discovery, helping each church to discern the kind of community that God is calling it to be. Journeys and pilgrimages are helped by having way-markers and stopping places. I commend this booklet, which offers a number of ways to reflect upon who we are and who God wants us to be and I encourage every one of you reading this to focus upon sharing the Good News with gladness and joy.

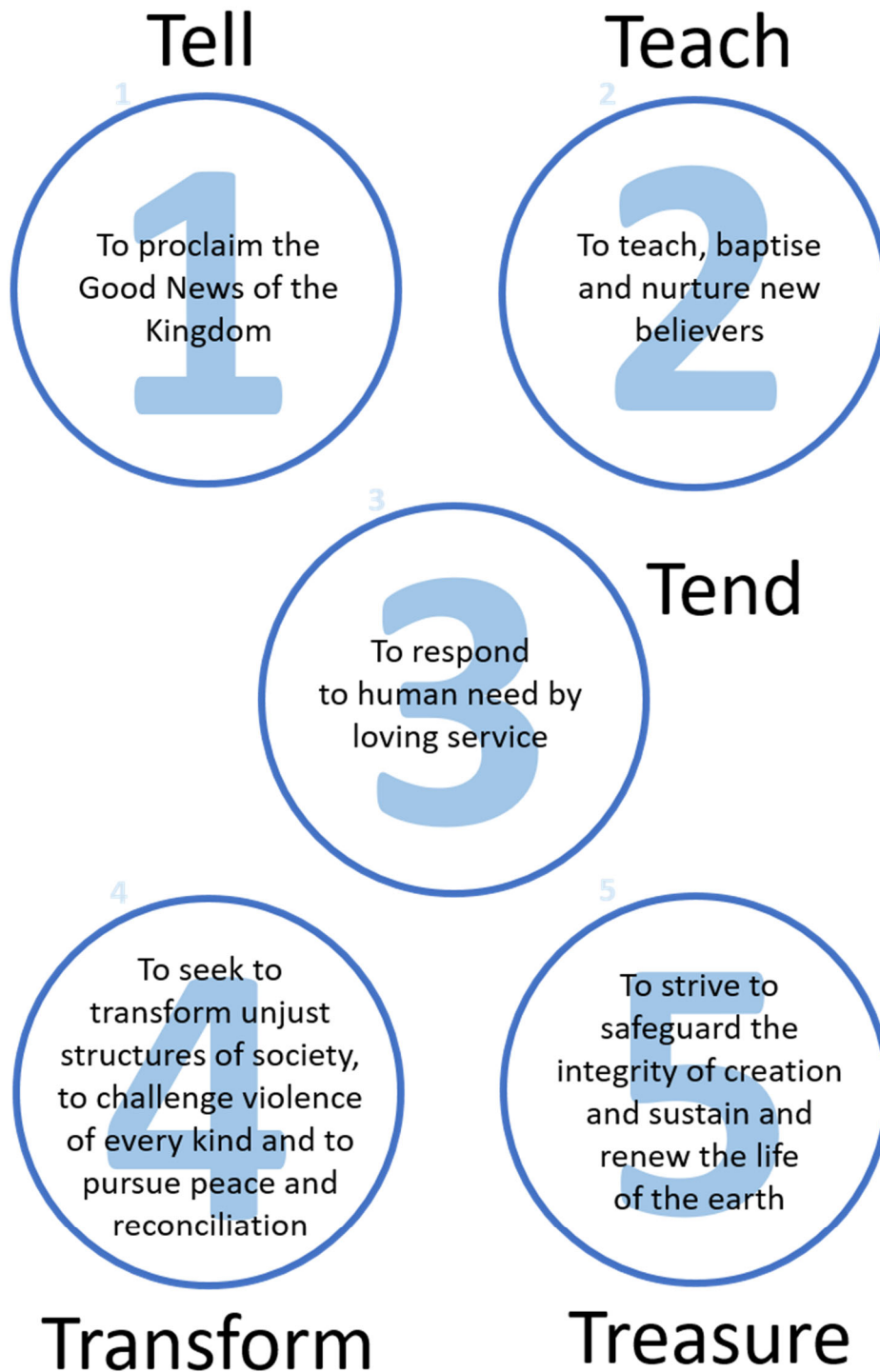
*Christopher Southwark*

***The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun***

*The Bishop of Southwark*



# The Five Marks of Mission



# Mission Action Planning: Where to Begin

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## What is a MAP?

A MAP has an outward and Kingdom-centred focus helping the church think beyond its walls to the community in which it sits. A MAP invites each church congregation to intentionally think through together how it is already living out the gospel in word and action amongst the people it is there to serve, and what it might do differently or better. A MAP means that a church has invested time in consulting the community and can therefore reach out purposefully and sensitively in all that it does. Above all, a MAP helps engage the whole church community in listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making connections and finding new opportunities to try things differently.

A rapidly changing social context in the UK means we cannot be complacent: the church today is in danger of becoming culturally irrelevant or unknown. The gospel needs contextualising in each generation. So, with our MAPs, we are urged to look beyond preserving the institution of the church for its own sake in order to share the hope and love of Jesus Christ more widely by building deep relationships within our communities and engaging with the real issues that they face.

## Missio Dei: God's mission not ours

MAP is rooted in the theology of 'Missio Dei'. Whatever we do as Christians, it is God who initiates. We are called to play our part in the biblical narrative of God's plan from creation to the fall and redemption of creation through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Our mission is joining in with God's mission and means our work together is to be far-reaching and wide-ranging. The Five Marks of Mission (evangelism, teaching, compassion, justice and care of creation) reflect this breadth. They engage the church, embrace society, and care for creation. What gives each of them life is the gospel of Jesus Christ, with its historical truth, its ongoing proclamation, and its embodiment in society and creation. Our mission is therefore all of them together, and though we may only do or embody a part of them as individuals and churches, they cannot be separated from one another, as all are done in the name of and because of Jesus.

# What does a good MAP look like?

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- **Embedded in Prayer** - the whole church has prayed for God's wisdom and vision as they consider their situation, and prayer is central to the MAP process
- **Consultative** - it has incorporated deep listening and has heard the needs of the local community, through quality consultation; it has also listened to members of all ages in the church
- **Includes an audit** conducted by the church leadership (lay or ordained) which includes information from the consultations above plus a review of the church's current mission and ministry
- **Vision-centred** - A MAP articulates a clear sense of vision founded on common ground: what is God calling the church to do and become in the next three to five years (something specific to the church and its locality rather than generic aspirations)
- **Has three main mission priority areas** focussed around the Five Marks of Mission (you don't have to fulfil all five!)
- **Contains a SMART plan** with resources and people matched to your goals, enabling a few things to be done well over a period of 1-2 years which are regularly reviewed
- **Owned widely** - a good MAP is communicated, publicised, understood and owned by the whole congregation; it is largely lay-led (not a list of activities to be done by the incumbent). It is more about a process and a conversation than a document! It will be revisited many times and frequently spoken about at PCC meetings, in sermons and other church occasions. It will become a familiar tool within the church community which can be used to hold the human and financial resources of the church as well as all its activities and direction in check.



# Mission Action Planning: How to Do It

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- **Pray:** organise opportunities for your congregation to pray both individually and corporately to discern where God is leading the church. Children and young people should be part of this process. Ideas could involve prayer walking the streets of your parish in twos and threes: meeting prayerfully to discuss observations, distributing individual prayer cards to church members, etc
- **Consult** your church and the wider community through conversations and questionnaires:
  - Give an opportunity to all ages in your congregation to say what they think about church, what it is good at, what it could be better at, and what they would like the church to look like in 3-5 years time (This could be done through a questionnaire or a variety of forums and open meetings)
  - Listening to the wider local community by using existing networks and relationships to talk to local residents; mobilise your local congregation to engage in a wider listening exercise with their neighbours, friends, interest groups, local organisations, networks, parents at local schools, groups who use the church buildings etc; organising a listening presence outside the church, setting up a table with noticeboard to engage with the local community. (Use supplementary information e.g. National Office of Statistics, Church Urban Fund to gain a full picture of your parish).
- Carry out an **audit:** assess your church's situation based on the listening and consultations above:
  - Who are we? (our story, values, people, time, talents, expertise)
  - What is God doing? (what have the consultations told you?)
  - Do a SWOT analysis: strengths - what you do well; weaknesses - what you do not do well or do not do at all; opportunities - things you could realistically do; threats - what stops, or would stop, you doing things?
  - (Other questions you could ask: How representative is your church of the community it serves? What are the missing groups? What are the social and pastoral needs? How is the church involved already in the life of the wider community and what opportunities does that give it?)

## Six missional questions a church can ask:

### *Evangelism, Formation and Vocation / Discipleship: (Faith)*

*Q1: Do we provide opportunities for people to explore the Christian faith?*

*Q2: Are we a learning community where members grow in the knowledge of God and the scriptures, a deepening life of prayer and worship, acts of loving service and witness?*

### *Hospitality and relationships: (Love)*

*Q3: Are we growing relationships that are loving and honest, able to work through conflict, celebrating unity in diversity? Where is our love overflowing naturally? How will this be visible and accessible?*

*Q4: Are we a welcoming and hospitable community?*

### *Making a Difference in the parish: (Hopeful Action)*

*Q5: Where does the church actively engage with the wider community?*

*Q6: What is one thing we could do to make a difference to the lives of the people living in the parish?*

- **Vision:** enable your church members to participate in a vision process. This requires setting some time aside (a minimum of 4 hours for a first time MAP) and could be done on a PCC or church 'away day', incorporating prayer, reflections, worship, Bible reading etc. Throughout the process the participants are asked to think about their dreams and hopes for their church alongside the information revealed in the audit. Use flipcharts, post-it notes, and small group work as well as plenary sessions to enable discussion and the capturing of ideas. Find the overlaps and common ground and build the vision on shared consensus. It can be helpful to have an external facilitator if doing it for the first time. Ensure that all ideas are heard and acknowledged as the Spirit speaks through each one of us.



- **Prioritise** three main areas based on the common themes and concerns that emerge during the envisioning process. Ensure each area correlates to one of the Five Marks of Mission and proceed to draw up the goals under each area.
- Create **SMART goals** (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant/Realistic, Time bound) under each missional priority area. This will help your MAP become real and achievable.
  - ➔ For each goal, one lead person must be identified to recruit and coordinate a small team to action the goal (incumbent should not be the default person)
  - ➔ Plan for communication and regular updates on progress/problems to the PCC and wider church
  - ➔ Look for some projects which can be shared with other churches in the area and ask, ‘what would be better done together?’ or ‘what can only be done together?’
- **Plan** dates and process for review (some goals will take longer than one year and can be updated as part of the review process).
  - ➔ For each priority, have one or two people responsible to make it happen. Plans should have a financial dimension and be reflected in your church budget/financial plan
- **Act** on the plans. Evaluate regularly, if something doesn’t work, try something else! There are no failures, only opportunities to try out new ideas.





# Pause for Reflection...

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## Quality versus Quantity

### Commit to 1 or 2 objectives under each priority area at a time

Doing one or two things well in an intentional and measurable way is preferable to taking on too many tasks and doing them superficially. Remember that there are two types of objectives: both are important but qualitative goals are often underrated.

- **Quantitative** - includes goals you can measure such as how many people are attending church worship, how many people have been baptised, the number of prayer or other groups that have been started or how much finance has been generated.
- **Qualitative** - this includes things like qualities, values, experiences, etc. Whilst these can be much harder to measure than quantitative indicators, they can have significant impact on areas that we can measure. For example, if growth in discipleship is happening, because there has been an increase in faith, hope and love amongst church members, this might result in more new people becoming involved in church, or a particular ministry flourishing which is something measurable.

When the focus is on qualitative outcomes, you may see quantitative outcomes too. Being less concerned about quantitative growth as a marker of 'success' could also give you space and permission to explore new ideas without the pressure to generate immediate numerical growth. It recognises that God's work of changing lives and deepening faith may be unseen, but is building a foundation for what is to come. You may not see numerical results of your hard work but sowing the seeds is part of proclaiming the gospel and, when done in faith, will ultimately reap reward.

*Matthew 13:24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field."*

*John 4:37-38 Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour."*

# Reviewing your MAP

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Review and update your MAP with your PCC and congregation annually with a full review every 3-5 years. Since a MAP should engage, and be owned by the whole church, it's important to include them in the review process. The depth of engagement with this process will determine the quality and effectiveness of your mission action planning. It requires asking honest questions about your church, listening prayerfully to the Holy Spirit and paying attention to your local context and what mission opportunities you may be called to respond to. It may also require you to take risks trying new things out, or not doing certain things at all.

## Evaluation and celebration

- How far did we achieve / not achieve our goals? And why?
  - what did success or failure look like?
  - Were they realistic?
  - Were resources overstretched?
  - Did other things happen that we had not planned for?
  - Was there adequate communication both with congregation members and within the PCC?
- What are the priorities that we need to focus on for the coming year?
  - Are there goals that we need to abandon, either for the time being or completely?
  - Do some of our goals need adapting in the light of progress made and lessons learned?
  - What new goals do we need to add, as we continue to make our vision a reality, building on what we have achieved?
- Where do we sense the Holy Spirit opening up new possibilities?
- Where do we need further training, support and/or resources to develop our lay leadership?
- How will we communicate and celebrate our MAP with others?

# 8 Common Factors of Growing Churches



# How useful is a MAP in a Vacancy?

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MAPs are a vital source of information and reflection during a vacancy, especially when writing a Parish Profile. While many parishes will have an up-to-date MAP, some may not have one at all, and others may have one which is due for review or which reflects the priorities of the previous incumbent more than those of the church as a whole.

A new MAP written during a vacancy will focus on the first stages of the MAP process and will be a useful exercise both for planning priorities for the period of interregnum and discerning the opportunities for mission and church growth that you will want a future incumbent to develop with your church.

A vacancy is also a good time to review an existing MAP. Perhaps identify:

- What has been achieved/not achieved from your stated objectives
- What has gone well/not so well?
- What have you learned about your church and the wider community?
- How far have the vision and actions been owned by the congregation?

Out of this review process you can modify and update your existing MAP objectives for the period of vacancy. It will be important to focus your resources on key areas of your church life and mission, so you may need to be strategic in choosing to work on fewer key objectives from your MAP, leaving some to be picked up again once a new incumbent is in post. You may decide that you need to develop a new MAP, if for example the MAP primarily reflects the previous incumbent's priorities, in which case, you can start the process afresh.

## Summary of a good MAP

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- **Prayer:** central to the MAP process
- **Consultation:** listen to the needs of your church and community
- **Audit:** review the church's mission and ministry
- **Vision-centred:** what is God calling the church to do and become
- **Priority areas:** three goals focussed around the Five Marks of Mission
- **SMART plan:** Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant/Realistic, Time bound
- **Owned widely:** understood, owned and led by the whole congregation



# Notes

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The Diocese of  
**Southwark**



The Diocese of Southwark has a strategic goal ‘to grow our average weekly attendance by 5% by 2025 partly through having each church develop a *high-quality Mission Action Plan* (MAP) which includes a course for evangelism and discipleship’. A Mission Action Plan is intended to support a process of prayer and discernment to help churches engage with their wider community and equip church members to serve and witness to Christ in their daily lives.

Can I encourage you to use this booklet as a means to help you discern the calling and the direction of your local church? It will inevitably raise questions. I hope that the Mission Team can continue to accompany you in your journey of discovery. Do be in touch with us if we can help further. May God bless the churches in the Diocese of Southwark as they seek to be a pilgrim people on The Way.

*The Revd Canon Jay Colwill*

*Canon Missioner and Director of Mission and Evangelism*

Stay with us Lord, open our eyes and set our hearts on fire,  
as you open your word, as you break your bread, as we live your life.  
Enrich us with your grace, empower us by your Spirit, enfold us in your love,  
as we walk along the journey of faith with you. Amen



Loving God  
Walking with Jesus  
Led by the Spirit

*Luke 24:13-35*