



The Diocese of  
**Southwark**



# Mission Action Planning

# Strategy for Ministry

## Mission Action Planning

### What is a MAP?

Mike Chew and Mark Ireland, in *How to do Mission Action Planning: A Vision Centred Approach* (SPCK, 2009), state:

“A Mission Action Plan is a document which outlines the mission activities that a local church is going to do in the coming months and years. It is built on a clear sense of God’s vision for the church - what God is calling the church to be and to do. So a MAP provides exactly what is says on the tin - an action plan for mission.” (p.1)

Simply put, a MAP is a process of strategic planning which reflects on opportunities and resources available to a local church and in the light of these creates a strategy to direct activities and decision making over the coming years, ideally setting some measurable goals along the way. The heart of mission action planning is the *process* by which a church comes to understand its mission and put that into effect, rather than the *product* of a document.

Chew and Ireland write,

“A MAP makes sure the life and work of your church is **purposeful... developing... and focussed.**” (p.2)

### Why are we doing this now?

The phrase ‘mission action planning’ is closely associated with the initiative of David Hope when he was Bishop of London in the early 1990s. Since then the concept has been taken and developed by many other Dioceses in the Church of England, so that now around half of all Dioceses have some kind of MAP strategy in place. Up until now Southwark has not developed a strategy for MAP. However, Strategy for Ministry as approved by Diocesan Synod in November 2012 embraces mission action planning as part of a strategy for growth which is seen as essential if the cuts envisaged in SfM are to be set in a missional context, not just one of tough financial realities. Having said that, it is of course the case that our financial situation will also improve if effective local mission leads to church growth. There is anecdotal support, and some statistical evidence (e.g. in the work of Bob Jackson) for the view that mission action planning has contributed to the growth of the church where it has been implemented. Faith Hope Love: Bishop Christopher’s Call to Mission has provided a particular mission focus for the Diocese over the past year or so. This can act as a launchpad for Mission Action Planning, which should now be seen as a further development of the ideas which underpin FHL.

## How does the MAP process work?

Chew and Ireland speak of a simple four-phase process in which each phase is undergirded with prayer (p.6). The phases are:

1. Review your situation;
2. Choose future priorities;
3. Make plans;
4. Act on the plans.

Further detail and useful questions are provided in their book. It will be important to get this material into the hands of the parishes, and this paper makes some specific recommendations as to how this could be done.

As part of mission action planning, parishes need to be asked to consider what they need to *stop* doing as well as what they need to start, and what barriers to growth exist which could be removed. Growth is essentially organic - living things grow, unless something is wrong. This ties in with David Bosch's notion of the church as "God's experimental garden on earth" (*Transforming Mission*, p.44) and the insights of Christian Schwarz's *Natural Church Development* programme, which will be a helpful tool for some churches in the MAP process.

Three key questions to enable churches to get started on mission action planning could be:

1. Where are we? (context and opportunities)
2. What do we bring? (resources and expertise)
3. What is God doing? (discernment and study)

While the MAP process should happen first and foremost at the parish level, there is also an opportunity at the deanery level, for deaneries to consider their collective mission, and to consider how their MAPs might function together to reach the diverse peoples of a whole community. Ecumenical partners could also be involved at this level.

It is essential that parishes understand that MAPs are living documents, which need to be revisited and refreshed on a regular basis - say, annually - and renewed from the beginning every five years.

## What should we do now?

The proposal is to launch mission action planning in the Diocese in the following way.

- Schedule a MAP training day for clergy and church leadership teams to be run once a term beginning Autumn 2013. (These days would be identical, with parishes invited to choose a date convenient for them.) The Canon Missioner would organise and lead these. They should take place on Saturdays in different parts of the Diocese to be accessible to as many people as possible.
- Bishop Christopher to write to all parishes inviting them to participate in these days and communicating the vision for mission action planning.
- Canon Missioner to investigate providing copies of Chew and Ireland's book for all parishes free of charge from mission funds, to be distributed when they attend a training day.
- Every parish to be asked to create their own MAP. The Canon Missioner will aim to ensure that support in facilitation can be provided when requested by the team of FHL facilitators trained by Poppy Hughes.
- MAPs will be submitted to the Area Bishop. The Area Bishop should acknowledge receipt with a word of encouragement, and be sure to use MAP as one part of discussion during parish visitations and any other interactions with the parish.
- Where there is no Episcopal visitation scheduled, another senior staff member - for example the Archdeacon or Canon Missioner - will contact each parish on receipt of MAP to offer feedback and any other help which may be required (and possible!)

*Stephen Hance April 2013*