



MISSION ACTION PLANNING

Mission and Discipleship The Diocese of Edmonton

Introduction

Mission Action Planning is a tried and tested way of fleshing out who we are in each local church, so that we use our gifts as His missional disciples in sharing His love and truth with our friends, families and community. It is a way of exploring our strengths and the challenges that face us, and putting together a realistic plan for the way forward that is God's call to us.

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 useful to a parish, rather than just a collection of grand ideas. This document offers basic guidelines on Mission Action Planning to get you started.

Mission Action Planning is integral to the strategic planning and delivery of effective mission and discipleship by parishes in the Diocese of Edmonton. Every parish is actively encouraged to have an up to date MAP.

Mission Action Plans are regarded as prime documents. The Diocesan involvement in the process will be to receive copies of the MAP. Archdeacon for Mission and Discipleship, the Ven. Richard King is available to you as a resource in putting your MAP together and helping you review and communicate it.

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 (MAP)?

The aim of a MAP is to be an organic document, expressing your church's DNA and helping to strengthen missional discipleship, both corporately and for each individual of your church. 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, giftings, location and tradition. 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?

Pray! Pray! Pray!

Listening to God is where we begin. What are we called to be and do as this particular parish, at this time, in this place with our particular gifts and skills?

Listening to each other:

What are the gifts and skills of your church family? There is no point and indeed only guaranteed failure in coming up with a plan that does not fit with what you are gifted to do. Perhaps a gifts survey of your church family needs to be done here. There are several available. Please contact Archdeacon Richard King for further information if you require it.

Listening to our community:

What connections, personal and corporate, do you have with your community? What are the needs of your community? Who can you ask within your community? 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. Then it's back to prayer!

Envisioning Exercise:

Brainstorm as a vestry or parish about new ideas and ventures. Pray – Be bold – listen to your heartfelt desires – listen to everyone present – don't worry about practicalities at this stage. An external facilitator can help sometimes with this part of the MAP process. Archdeacon Richard King has assisted parishes in the diocese with this part of the process.

Use an Analysis tool:

Models like the 'G.R.O.W.' or 'S.W.O.T.' tools can be helpful. Use whichever one suits you best. For the SWOT tool, 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. If you use the GROW tool, decide on your Goal, the Realities (strengths and weaknesses), Options and then decide what you Will do.

Resources:

Consider what people and skills will be needed to accomplish your objectives. 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.

Your MAP might end up being a three/five year plan! This is okay.

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.

Review the Plan regularly:

It is a living document. Once prepared and underway, it is vital that the implementation of the MAP is monitored both for what goes right and what goes wrong. 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 your Parish.