

Mission Action Planning at Saint Michael's Bramcote

Introduction

The Mission Action Plan (MAP) process has been around for some considerable time, and there is no doubt that many parishes have found the process to be a highly creative approach to building up the church.

As the Fresh Expressions movement has helped us to understand, mission in Britain addresses not one but numerous local cultures, often within a discrete geographical location, each having their own distinct social profile and 'language'. Much of the most effective mission activity of recent decades has been carefully and prayerfully responsive to those local cultures, with the result that the church's overall mission is both multi-faceted and deeply contextualised.

As practiced within parishes, Mission Action Planning is a valuable tool for precisely this kind of contextually sensitive and purposeful mission.

The MAP Cycle

The MAP cycle is one of **LISTENING** to God, one another and the parish community, **CONSIDERING** the key themes discerned within and by the local church community as it seeks to step out in faith and act upon God's calling, and **ACTING** through prayer, reflection and discussion - implementing considered measures to bring about growth and progress.



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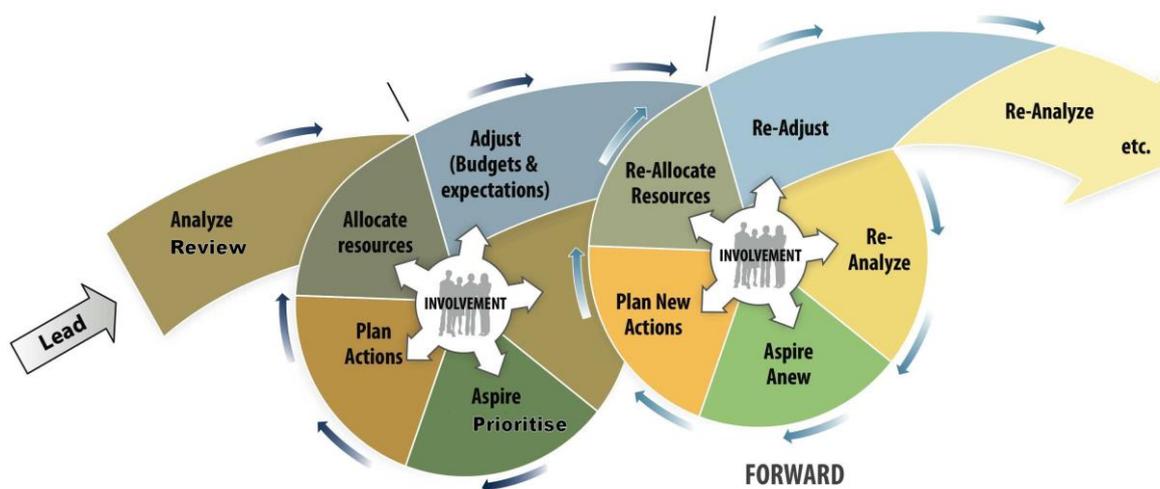
Mission Action Planning is best done within the framework of the overall Diocesan vision, whilst being firmly rooted within the specific context(s) of the local parish. As such, it offers a simple analysis of where the Church and local community stand at any moment in time, and by providing a clear understanding of what God wishes to do within and for those communities by addressing any key opportunities and threats, thus ensuring that the parish is able to engage fully in God's mission.

Setting a clear vision and specific objectives for the church

The core issue here, is simply where do we want to see Saint Michael's parish in, say, three to five years' time, in keeping with the Diocesan vision of every parish growing deeper, wider and younger, thus creating a mature church, reaching out into the local community with God's message of salvation, love and grace for all peoples and of all ages.

Once the specific vision and plan has been discerned, it's time to create a clear plan of action, to set specific priorities and budgets, and to decide how differently the parish should look in three to five years' time.

The MAP process should then start again in order for the parish to be relevant and effective into the next phase of its history, in tandem with the prevailing vision of the Diocese, as a cycle of prayerful discernment and obedient action.



In short, the MAP process provides a constant cycle of review, reflection, planning, prioritisation and action to ensure the spiritual and numerical growth of the Church within the local parish community.

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The MAP Process

To successfully implement a MAP, various discrete stages need to be adopted by individuals, leadership groups and the parish as a whole. They are described below in the order in which, ideally, they should be followed:

- (1) A time of **Discerning Prayer – Listening** to the voice of God speaking to us both directly and through his written word, as we seek his will for us – fully recognising his eternal plans for the whole of creation and for our parish in particular.
- (2) A time of **Discerning Observation – Looking** at the present realities of our society, culture and parish in particular. In doing so, we need to recognise both the strengths and weaknesses which prevail in order that we might go on to discern future opportunities and threats.
- (3) A time of **Discerning Reflection – Learning** how best to move forward together in order to fulfil God's plans and vision for our individual lives and the parish as a whole.
- (4) A time for **Making Plans, Setting Priorities, Creating a Clear Timetable for Action, and Setting any Necessary Budgets.** In short, turning hopes, dreams and vision into a living reality.
- (5) A time of **Clear Communication** – wherein the discerned vision of God and established plans are communicated to everyone within the congregation, who are then urged to participate fully in a spirit of togetherness for the greater good and God's glory.
- (6) A time of **Shared Action** – wherein everyone works together to bring about what we have discerned to be the plans and vision of God at this time.

Each of the above stages will be discussed and overseen by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) together with its various committees and working groups. The congregation will receive regular reviews throughout in order that they are fully aware of progress as it is made. The MAP process will culminate with a Parish Consultation event wherein the established MAP, together with its resultant outcomes, will be communicated, and full active engagement encouraged.

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