A possible MAP process for smaller urban and rural congregations

Derby Diocese have been offering this “lighter touch” MAP process to its rural parishes. They have given permission for Newcastle to use it and make it available on our website. Please feel free to use any aspects you may find useful.

The Newcastle Evangelism Task Group and John Sinclair are always available to offer assistance, and suggest a facilitator to help. Having the same facilitator throughout is probably helpful.

This seems to be a sensible approach for some rural or small urban parishes as:
- It is less pressurised for a small congregation
- The whole congregation are involved in developing the MAP
- It is more appropriate for their setting and context

Beginning MAP
Set aside several Sundays to complete MAP process (probably 3)
Suggestion is 1 service per month over 3 month period
For all 3 services the Vicar gives a thought/ homily which either follows the theme or the Liturgy for that week. Church service should be 1.5 hours maximum
It may be appropriate to share a meal together before/after one of these services?
At each of these services there will need to be a facilitator to pull together the information while the thought and worship is being undertaken.

Service 1 Review “Where we are coming from”
Purpose: By the end of the service the congregation will have had an opportunity to review their church and its current mission in the community.

Get the congregation split into small groups and to do a “mini” SWOT analysis.
(Download available on Newcastle diocesan website)

Ask them to reflect on the life of the church and to consider the following 2 questions:
- What has gone well
- What hasn’t gone so well

You may want to help the thought process by giving them the 4 headings of: Spirituality, discipleship, evangelism and community engagement.
Alternatively you may want to suggest aspects of the life of the church they might want to think about such as:
Children and youth, Sunday and mid-week worship, ministry to the elderly, study groups and fellowship meetings, evangelism courses and other ways of encouraging discipleship, your church buildings, contacts with the wider community, ecumenical relationships, encouraging everyone to participate in the mission and ministry of the Church.

Small groups think this through and capture their thoughts on paper. One person from each group then reports back on their behalf to the whole congregation.
Papers then passed on to the facilitator.
The facilitator will begin to collate and summarise the papers.
In the prayers you may want to use some of the initial thoughts that have been captured to:

- Thank God and celebrate the things that have gone well
- Pray that through this process you will be able to discern what should be done about the things that haven’t been so successful

A brief summary is then given to the congregation by the facilitator, at end of service, so they are left with something to think and pray about during the coming weeks.

Complete the exercise and review as a small group before the next service.

Consider if you want a small group to review the local community and to look at some of the “vital statistics*” to discern some of the key areas that the church is/isn’t involved in that may needed to be considered in the MAP.

*Useful site - http://www.cuf.org.uk/povertyinengland

Service 2 “Where are we going” - Dream the Dream

Purpose: By the end of the service that a vision is starting to emerge and is captured in 2/3 sentences that is acceptable to most within the church.

The vision should communicate the overall focus and aims of the church in the future. It may also capture the values you want to have.

Using the same facilitator/s at each service might help with continuity.

5 minutes introduction - summarising the review from the last service.

Working in small groups, get the congregation to “dream a dream” for your church

Write down what their dreams are for the church over the next 3 years and report back to the rest of the congregation. Perhaps using the ‘headline’ process (See separate download on diocesan website)

Capture the main themes coming from the groups.

Facilitator/s take sheets away and draft up a form of words

Vicar does talk, worship

Facilitators come back and report the main findings from the dreaming exercise.

Further analysis can be done by a small group after the service. Facilitators will revise draft vision accordingly.

Vicar and PCC will need to meet to consider the vision and make changes if necessary. This should be brought back to the congregation within 2 weeks.

Service 3 – “What’s the best way to get there?”

Purpose: To establish what should be done to achieve the vision over the next 3 years.

There is a bit of work to be done before this service. Thoughts and possible priority areas of work should displayed in some way before the service, so that the congregation can begin to see how far they have come.
Having a creative thinking session with a small group before this service could achieve:

- emerging ideas of possible areas of work
- a few areas of general priority
- Specific tasks that could become part of a MAP

At the service share the draft vision and values that have emerged

Get individuals to nominate (perhaps in silence with stickers or markers) what they see as most important. Recording their name will help for the future.

The top 4 or 5 areas of work should probably become priorities for the future.

This session will need to be specifically designed for your context. Is it practical for people to move around? Does everything need to be presented from the front? Should there be A4 copies of dreams and analysis for everyone, or can people work in groups. The facilitator has a vital role in shaping this session. The aim is appropriate worship combined with commitment to the future.

Ask them to think of all the possibilities they, as a church, might want to do to achieve the vision in the next 3 years.

You will want to mention some of the insights that have come from any community audit that may have been carried out.

To help their thinking you may wish to use:

- The 4 themes of, spirituality, discipleship, evangelism and community engagement.
- Aspects of the life of the church such as: Children and youth, Sunday and mid-week worship, ministry to the elderly, study groups and fellowship meetings, evangelism courses and other ways of encouraging discipleship, your church buildings, contacts with the wider community, ecumenical relationships, encouraging everyone to participate in the mission and ministry of the church.

By the end of the service there should be priority areas, or specific tasks identified by congregation members.

These will form the beginning of parish task groups to further the work of the next MAP.

Before the final hymn the congregation will be told when the PCC will meet to do the final review and produce the new MAP.

Once passed by the PCC each member should have a copy of the new MAP which should be reviewed on a regular basis.
Note: It may be appropriate for your parish to concentrate on what it means for you and your community to be Generous, engaged and open which have become the Newcastle Diocesan keynote qualities over recent years.


you could watch the video featuring Geoff and Peter our archdeacons as part of your planning for MAP 3. Resource available by clicking here.

Note:
The diocesan adviser in local evangelism can be contacted by clicking here