Mission Action Planning

Over recent years, Newcastle has been committed to using Mission Action Plans (MAP’s) as one tool for helping churches focus on their community, mission and outreach. Every Parish Priest is expected to take an active part in the development of Parish Mission Action Plans as a means of seeking to ensure a vibrant and sustaining Christian presence in every community.

The Local Evangelism Adviser and the Evangelism Task Group are resources that can be used to help those in parishes tasked with producing and delivering their MAP. It can be very beneficial when this work is taken on by a Local Ministry Development Team or by a group gathered from various areas of parish life. There are four stages to Mission Action planning which are:

The Starting point

Asking questions about links between the church community and the wider community can help our honest thinking about our strengths and weaknesses. This could lead to a better understanding of needs and opportunities. This is also a listening stage - listening to each other, the community and God.

The Healthy Churches process can be very valuable part of this process. It can help us to define those things that we want to celebrate as well as those things we find challenging.

The Vision

Once there is a sense of where we are starting from, the MAP process encourages us to consider where we would like to be in three years’ time. There is a temptation to rush into producing a plan without taking time to consider, prayerfully, what God is doing in the church and wider community. Asking questions about how God wants us to engage with the wider community is useful. Before beginning this stage of the diocesan MAP journey, taking advantage of the MAP help available from the Local Evangelism Adviser and the Task Group can be very beneficial.

The Planning

This is the priority setting stage. It’s the What, Who, When details along with completion information. Like any journey it is easier when we have an idea of the route in our mind. With an emphasis on prayer and planning, a Local Ministry Development Team is an ideal group to take ‘ownership’ of specific priorities. Further groups may be gathered of people who have appropriate skills, gifts, insights, experiences, along with a real passion for the subject. A church with a number of priorities could have a number of priority groups to help deliver its MAP goals.

The delivery, monitoring and review

This is the stage when we make sure we are supporting the people involved in delivering our plan. It’s about churches being practical. It is about taking action and reviewing the process. A plan that just sits on a shelf is not worth producing. Regular review is one of the keys to success. The Local Ministry Development Team and the Deanery Development Group could help significantly with this stage. Each round of MAPs is shaped by the developing priorities of the diocese.

Other things to consider:

Ask the Local Evangelism Adviser about a Healthy Churches day
Hold a Church Listening Day of prayer and reflection on mission
Road test a discipleship course with the congregation before deciding to use it as part of the MAP
There may be other churches nearby with similar plans where resources might be shared