

Mission Action Planning – Writing the Plan

We have spent a lot of time preparing to write our Mission Action Plan. What I am about to suggest in terms of writing the plan assumes that you have read the previous articles that preceded this one. If not, proceeding without that information will result in your MAP being a to-do list which is not owned by enough of your church.

So who makes the MAP? We've said already that the more input and ideas you can gather from the whole congregation, or at least the Vestry, the more likely people are to own and engage with implementing the plan. Once you have that input, it might be best to allow the Corporation to shape it; to prioritise perhaps three ideas to tackle first; all the while sticking with the direction of travel in which the church family needs to grow. That direction of travel *must* catalyse discipleship and, as we have seen in the diocesan missional model, Jesus catalyses our discipleship through active involvement in His mission to reach the world. If this is not the intended outcome of your MAP, then in my view and to put it bluntly, it is pointless.

If the church family, or at least the Vestry, has engaged in the process so far, you will likely have a lot of ideas to work with. It's amazing what ideas come up! You won't be able to do them all at once. Don't try! Discern the pace that will be best for your congregation. In our case (St. Luke's) we had so many ideas that we filtered them into a three-year plan. That's okay. In fact, there are a few things that are perfectly "okay" in writing your plan:

- It's okay to rough out a plan that covers more than one year
- It's okay to try new things
- It's okay to acknowledge if something hasn't worked and to learn from that and try something different
- It's okay for things to turn out differently than you imagined
- It's okay to re-shape and change the plan as you go.

The MAP must be a "living" document which shapes your direction of travel, but doesn't stifle it. Some like lots of detail in their MAP. I prefer a clear focus on priorities, but not so much detail that we are locked into a timeline or task list that ends up being a burden. A MAP should enthuse, encourage and envision, not depress or weigh-down. Once the Corporation has developed the shape of a plan, the Vestry can discuss and approve. (The Vestry could do the shaping as well, but sometimes it's easier to get traction in writing with a smaller group.)

Then comes the work of communicating the plan to the entire congregation, not just once, but continually talking about how it informs the mission and

ministry of the church. Otherwise, it becomes a document we discussed once that now lives in a drawer.

A good resource to help further is a superb book: *How to do Mission Action Planning* by Mike Chew. It's less than \$20 on Amazon.

May God bless you richly as you move forward.

Richard