

Mission Action Planning – Collecting and Prioritizing Ideas

We've come a long way on this journey of working out our Mission Action Plan (MAP)!

- We've seen that the whole point is not to plan a few events, but to actually become missional disciples who make missional disciples, and we found our model in the way Jesus' sends out his disciples to learn by doing (Luke 7).
- We looked at praying and thinking through who we are as a church family and in what direction of travel Jesus might be leading us.
- We considered that all the things we normally call 'ministry' must be included so we can 'join the dots' and make sense of all we do.
- We have examined the 'red flag alerts' that can at best hinder and at worst completely derail even the best MAP.

Along the way, we said that we must have a good process for collecting ideas; that in a MAP-making session it's good to give people time to think and write down their ideas before launching into group discussion in which the extroverts (I know, I am one) always tend to dominate.

This is even more necessary if we're going to get more of the church family involved, and that really is important. We are all the Body of Christ and the process of producing the MAP should involve as many church members as possible. I suggest that setting aside a day for the whole church to come together is a good way forward if you want everyone to own the process and subsequent plan.

One way to capture ideas is to ask everyone this question: "If your church could try one thing, what would it be? If you set aside concerns about money, time or guarantee of success and took a risk on doing one thing, what would you love your church to try?" Again, it's best to ask everyone to do this in writing, even on something as simple as a 'sticky note' that can be handed in anonymously. I have found that the advantage of collecting ideas this way is that it releases the 'missional imagination' of the church family. It prevents the cynical or overly-pragmatic from

suffocating innovation, yet still preserves the common sense and realism needed in the process.

Then, because it is impossible to hone the details of a MAP in a very large group, the Vestry or Corporation could decide on which three or four ideas to take forward from those sticky-notes. There will be more than three good ideas! The other good ones can be part of a rolling, developing plan over 3-5 years that can be reviewed and tweaked as you go.

I then ask five questions that, for me, are vital. Do these ideas, when put together in our MAP, help us as a church family:

- to move forward as a movement? (The Christian church is a missional movement, not a monolithic institution.)
- to be faithful followers of Jesus?
- to connect with people outside our church family?
- to care for each other?
- to grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God?

Unless the ideas we want to implement in our MAP provide a clear 'yes' to all five questions, we must tweak them until they do or drop them and try again.

Next time, we write the plan.

With every blessing,

Richard