

Mission Planning

A guide for local churches

*What is God calling your church
to be and to do?*



Foreword

Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, defined mission as, “finding out what God is doing and joining in”.

We are reminded by this quote that the church exists only to be part of God’s mission in the world and that God goes before us in whatever missional activities we undertake. Every local church therefore has the task of discerning how God is calling them to ‘join in’.

As we discern our role, it is vital to remember that the good news of Jesus is about the transformation of our communities and the world. Proclaiming the Gospel includes, among other things, responding to human need, transforming unjust structures, challenging violence and striving to safeguard the integrity of creation.

At times we may feel that we lack the capacity or resources for this task, but we should take heart from the scriptures and church history. In these we see that when people respond to the call of God in faith, God provides what is needed.

We are also reminded that we are called to employ the resources we have generously and wisely, seeking to be both faithful and effective in all we do.

As you work through this guidebook, seeking to discern God’s call for your church, you are encouraged to keep one question before you at all times: *What is God calling your church to be and to do?* Discerning the answer to this question and fulfilling it through intentional, organised action is, in the end, the primary purpose of planning for mission.

God bless you in your searching, listening, planning and action.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr Stephen Harrison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Stephen Harrison
Executive Director
Parishes and Other Mission Agencies Commission

About this Guide

This short guidebook has been prepared to assist local church leaders with the process of discerning and articulating how their local church will play a part in God's mission in the world.

This guidebook can be used by Parish Councils, Clergy and Churchwardens to help discern and agree on the overall vision of the church and the steps the people of that church will take to realise that vision.

This guidebook contains suggested supplementary tools and resources to help with each phase of the mission planning process. Please be encouraged to explore other resources in order to shape a process that is suitable for your church and context.

If you require assistance with mission planning or using this guidebook, please contact the Parishes and Other Mission Agencies Commission (PMC):
email: pmc@anglicanchurchsq.org.au
phone: (07) 3835 2284.

What is Mission Planning?

Mission planning is the process whereby your church articulates a vision for the future and develops a realistic plan for how that vision might be fulfilled. Your church's mission plan sets out its goals and the practical steps the people of that church will take to achieve them.

Mission planning involves exploring the church's strengths, opportunities in the wider community and the various challenges of the local context as part of the process of discerning God's special call to your church.

Mission planning, if not grounded in prayer, scripture, theological reflection and the worshipping life of your church, will be nothing more than a secular planning activity. Ultimately the whole process of mission planning is about discerning what God is calling your church to be and do. It is important therefore from the outset that there is intentionality around the spiritual aspects of mission planning. This could include a period of prayer focused on the planning process, preaching with reflection on mission, or small group study, prayer and reflection on relevant topics. This guide includes suggested resources to assist with these activities.

The Mission Planning Process – Overview

Mission planning in this guide involves five steps:

1. **Prepare:** *What do we need to do to begin?*
2. **Explore:** *Where are we starting from?*
3. **Envision:** *What is God calling us to be and do?*
4. **Plan:** *What's the best way to get there?*
5. **Implement:** *What is the next thing we need to do?*

As you work through this guide, each step is explained and recommended actions are suggested. Resources are provided for some of the actions in order to assist you in completing them. It is recommended that you read all the way through the guide to get a sense of the overall direction it is taking you. Once you have done this you might then work through each step and the resources provided.

Attributes of a strong Mission Plan

As you develop a mission plan for your church, the following attributes of a strong mission plan should be kept in mind. The resources attached to this guide will assist you in developing each of these attributes.

Faithful	
<i>Missionally clear</i>	Clear and connects with the <i>Marks of Mission</i> or another schema for understanding Christian mission.
<i>Ecclesiologically sound</i>	Reflects Anglican church practice: worship, ministry, fellowship, evangelism and discipleship.
<i>Anglican</i>	Grounded in the Anglican tradition.

Effective	
<i>Outcome-focussed</i>	Clear and measurable goals.
<i>Sufficiently resourced</i>	Resources are identified and available.
<i>Strategic</i>	Compatible with broader mission goals (Deanery, Regional and Diocesan).
<i>Responsive</i>	Considers the needs and activities of the wider community.
<i>Achievable</i>	Realistic for the church, taking account of time, people and resources.
<i>Consultative</i>	Developed through wide consultation and strongly supported.
<i>Motivating</i>	Creative, inspiring, exciting.

The Mission Planning Process

1.

Prepare

What do we need to do to begin?



2.

Explore

Where are we starting from?



3.

Envision

What is God calling us to be and to do?



4.

Plan

What's the best way to get there?



5.

Implement

What is the next thing we need to do?



1.

Prepare

What do we need to do to begin?



In this phase you will explore the purpose of mission planning, decide if your church will engage in the process and prepare church members for the work ahead.

Mission planning will be most effective if your church and its key stakeholders understand the process and are committed to it. If you are a Rector/Priest-in-Charge or Churchwarden, this might mean first exploring with Parish Council why mission planning is important. The Parish Council will need to support the process and be advocates for it within the church.

The 'Prepare' phase might require some time to ensure church members understand both the purpose of mission planning and its place in the life of the church, and are also fully supportive of it.

In this phase it is important to begin the work of prayer and reflection on the scriptures. You may decide that this activity will occur before you begin broader discussion with Parish Council about embarking on mission planning.

Before you begin this phase it might be helpful to read *Resource C: Communication, Consultation, Consensus and Change*.

Tasks

- Explore with Parish Council why mission planning is beneficial and make the decision to start.
See Resource A
- Prepare a timeline and program for the work ahead.
See Resource B
- Inform church members that you are beginning a process of mission planning and recruit them to the process.
See Resource C
- Engage church members in prayer, preaching, Bible study and worship focussed on mission and the work ahead.
See Resource D

2.

Explore

Where are we starting from?



This phase is focused on more clearly understanding your church and local community.

At the end of this phase you will have developed a clear picture of who you are as a church, including the church's values, strengths, weaknesses and activities. You will also have a clear understanding of the wider community (suburb or town) where the church is located. This includes: who lives in the community, what they are like and the things they might need.

It is important in developing this understanding to consult with as many people as possible, both inside and outside the church.

It would also be helpful to develop some understanding about the purpose of 'the church', its mission and what might make the local expression of it healthy and growing (in membership, faith, service and generosity).

The first three tasks in the task list might take 1-3 months. Time will be needed to collect information and to meet together to discuss and explore the information with each other.

In completing this phase, your church should have the information it needs to develop a vision for its future that's grounded in the reality of both the church and the wider community.

Tasks

- Gather information about the church, its members and activities to create a church profile.
See Resource E
- Gather information about the local community to create a community profile.
See Resource F
- Learn what research says about church growth and health.
See Resource G
- Meet with church members to share information collected and contribute to creating a church/community profile together.
- Have a small working group draw together the information into a church and community profile.
- Share the profile with church members, allowing for feedback.
See Resource C

3.

Envision



What is God calling us to be and to do?

This phase draws on the information gathered in the 'Explore' phase to develop a vision for what your church might be and do.

The envisioning process is about discerning and listening to God's call to your church. It is okay to be bold and to dream big. It is important to involve as many people in this phase as possible. You may want to hold a visioning day with all church members. You may also like to offer and facilitate a variety of individual ways for people to contribute.

While you want wide input into the vision, it is best to appoint a small group of people to draw together the strands of the dreaming into a coherent picture. This can then be shared with church members and the wider community to see what they think. After this consultation, further refinement might take place.

Tasks

- Provide church members with an opportunity to share their vision for the church.
- Prepare a draft church vision.
See Resource H
- Share the draft vision with the Parish Council, church members and wider community, allowing for feedback.
See Resource C

4.

Plan

What's the best way to get there?



This phase involves drawing a small team together to prepare a mission plan based on the work produced in the 'Envision' phase.

Having developed a church vision, it is now time to decide on priorities, sets some goals and identify what is needed to fulfil them. The plan should ideally cover a period of three years.

It is important that goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound. It's important to articulate who is responsible for realising each goal and what resources will be needed.

Tasks

- Gather a small team to prepare a mission plan.
- Prepare a mission plan.
See Resource 1
- Seek feedback on the plan from Parish Council.
- Seek feedback on the plan from church members.
- Finalise and publish the church vision and mission plan.

5.

Implement

What is the next thing we need to do?



The implementation phase involves encouraging, equipping, empowering, supporting and following up those people who have responsibility for realising goals.

At the start of this phase, you may wish to launch or publicise the church vision and mission plan, sharing it widely within your church and also with relevant people in the local community. In this phase, the plan should be a central part of Parish Council discussions, with Councillors monitoring progress and continually asking the question, 'what is the next step?'

Tasks

- Launch the church vision and mission plan.
- Engage intentionally with those responsible for realising goals.
- Review the progress of the plan.

See Resource J

Supplementary Resources

1.

Prepare

- A. Why do Mission Planning?
- B. Timeline and Program for Mission Planning
- C. Communication, Consultation, Consensus and Change
- D. Prayer and Study Resources



2.

Explore

- C. Communication, Consultation, Consensus and Change
- E. Understanding your Church
- F. Understanding your Local Community
- G. Understanding Church Purpose and Growth



3.

Envision

- C. Communication, Consultation, Consensus and Change
- H. Clarifying Vision and Values



4.

Plan

- I. Creating a Mission Plan



5.

Implement

- J. Implementing and Reviewing a Mission Plan



Acknowledgements

This guidebook has been prepared with reference to:

1. Chew, M. & Ireland, M. *How to do Mission Action Planning: Prayer, Process and Practice*. 2nd ed. London: SPCK. 2009.
2. Mission planning material produced by The Dioceses of [London](#), [Exeter](#), [Manchester](#), [Carlisle](#) and [Melbourne](#).
3. Robinson, S., Smith, C. & Wilson, M. *Mission Action Planning: The M.A.P for Churches and Organisation in the 21st Century*. Anglicare: Diocese of Synod. 2004.
4. Williams, R. *God's Mission and Ours in the 21st century*, viewed 13 June 2019, <http://aoc2013.brix.fatbeehive.com/articles.php/779/gods-mission-and-ours-in-the-21st-century>