Planning for Mission



A summary for vestries and congregations

"It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God's mission."
Christopher J. H. Wright

Introduction

Mission Plans are not (should not be) scary. They are a useful tool to discern the next phase of congregational life and they identify priorities for your ministry and mission.

There are many ways to think about a Mission Plan and we've produced a detailed booklet on a few different ways. The important thing is to ensure that the structure inspires you and is relevant and useful in your context.

This is a summary of that fuller document, but also includes a straightforward way to get started.

A well-written Church Mission Plan should enable and inspire ministry, mission, planning, measurement, and accountability. It gives focus and intentionality, enabling a congregation to use their time, energy and resources in line with what they have discerned God's calling to be at this particular time.

This is not to increase your workload; it is about capturing what you are doing and helping to focus and work more intentionally. Putting together a Mission Plan could happen as a whole congregation at an AGM or away day; or with the vestry or ministry group at a dedicated meeting. We hope that by setting aside time to pray, listen and discuss the priorities of the church for the next few years, you will discover how God is leading you and what God is doing in your community and the community you serve.

Please remember that a Mission Action Plan is not a stick with which to beat yourself! And as least as important, probably more so, than putting it together, is having it on the agenda at every vestry meeting. Not in order to tick a box but because, if the Mission Action Plan truly describes your purposes and your mission, surely it naturally forms part of the vestry agenda. It helps you look back on what you have actually managed to do and achieve and be a great affirmation – we're often much too focused on the deficits in church life. Furthermore, the Mission Action Plan is not something set in stone but will naturally change, will maybe need amending, certainly developing: anything that hasn't worked is **not** a disaster but a helpful thing from which to learn for the future (so take time to look carefully at what went on) and plan accordingly.

 **Looking for more ideas?** Access all our Mission Planning documents at edinburgh.anglican.org/mission-planning

Process for a Mission Plan

Prayer: Mission Planning is always rooted in prayer. Prayer for your church, for the community you serve, for the people God has brought together in partnership with you, for the congregation that gathers. And as we pray … we must remember to listen. How is God calling and inviting you to change, to be transformed and to transform the community in which you live?

Look at your community: Mission Plans look at the place of the church in the community now. They listen to what God might be saying and inviting the church to, and they seek to see where God is at work so that we as the People of God can join in.

Consider your vision: This can be done:

- by naming a different future vision that emerges from a need in the community you serve;
- by praying through the Anglican Marks of Mission and discerning where God is calling you to focus now;
- by considering our baptism vows and how we are living them out day by day as individuals and as a community.

Articulate the task: Task orientation takes the bigger goals of our discipleship and identifies key ways to address them. This might be:

- in practical ways (community involvement, communication); or
- more internal discipleship (training for leadership, deepening discipleship courses).

Regular review: Your Mission Plan should be considered at every vestry meeting. This can lead to both thanks and encouragement for what has happened, as well as a re-focusing for key tasks.

Finances: Although our mission is God's mission and finances should not dictate what God is up to, we are aware that the way we budget and use our finances reflects what is important to us. **As part of your mission planning, you may like to look at what you have: whether the gifts and assets you have been given are being buried away or are being used for the work of the kingdom.** Sometimes listening to God may be about using your assets – finances, building, people – in different ways.

MISSION ACTION PLAN for [*your charge*]

Updated on [*date*]

Remember, it is better to do few things well than being over-ambitious and spreading yourself too thinly.

The table on p. 6 has seven columns. Here's what to put:

Aim: Specify the expected and intended outcome – this is not what you are going to do, but what you think and hope and pray it will lead to

Action: What are you going to do?

Timescale: When will you start, for how long are you planning to do this (at least initially)?

Lead Person: This is NOT the person who will do everything singlehandedly but the person who has the overview and will guide the action and who you can ask how it's going (and encourage!)

Resources: How much time will this demand and of whom, and if there is a financial cost, what is it? This is also where you can check that it's not the same person or persons responsible for every action!

Progress: Your Mission Action Plan is never a static document but a working one that you'll want to update all the time as you have it before you at every vestry and team meeting. It's great to see where things have developed and a good discipline to become aware of where it's stalling. Note here where you've got to, whether you're preparing or whether you've started, maybe also why there has been a delay or a re-think…

Completed: Note that you've done what you set out to do – it's important to see for everyone. Celebrate!… before considering your next step building on this, which could be continuation or variation etc.

And ask yourself:

In which area of work could we achieve the greatest positive change and have the biggest impact?

Remember that we generally overestimate what can be achieved in a year and underestimate what can be achieved in five years!

So while you continue to do essentials, this question gives permission to bundle prayer, time and money, and focus it on one particular area of ministry and mission which could bring about real change for the growth of the church.

In order to identify the key area for targeting support, it will pay to take time, listen, reflect and review this very carefully with everyone in your congregation, and also consult friendly people outside your church community. It's not a decision you can make in one vestry meeting!

IMPORTANT: Please also decide what to STOP doing as you target your resources – this is often the hardest question to answer.

Aim	Action	Timescale	Lead Person	Resources, incl: additional needs, stopped doing	Progress and learning	Completed
EXAMPLE Increased and deepened prayer at home	Produce a parish prayer diary	First edition in Lent	Freda, liaising with ministry team, or retired Priest A or Reader B	Rector to prepare congregation; 20 hrs for Freda plus photocopying, £20; Freda no longer cleans the silver	Good initial uptake on Ash Wed, more printed; some still need encouragement; good feedback for next version! budget for printing costs and invite contributions	✓ improved version in the autumn
EXAMPLE Engage and enthuse parents/carers with the Gospel	Build up a café congregation Jim and Lizzie	3 years	Sort out venue (community centre or local pub?)	Ask Mission & Ministry Committee	Parents help with shaping end of term service	Parents enquiring about baptism, or Enquirers' Course or …

In order to help us with this, we will stop doing/phase out the following:
