

Canon Mike Chew has been the Business Excellence Director for Philips Lighting, and was responsible for the development and implementation of the Philips global improvement strategy process, while at the same time being churchwarden of an Anglican parish in Lancashire. He is currently serving as MAP and growth strategy facilitator for the Blackburn diocese.

Mark Ireland was formerly diocesan missionary for the Lichfield diocese, and is now vicar of All Saints Wellington with St Catherine's Eyton. He is a member of General Synod and co-author of *Evangelism – which way now?* (Church House Publishing, second edition, 2005) and *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age* (Church House Publishing, 2005).

*To our respective wives, Gill and Gil,  
without whose support and patience this book  
would not have materialized. We dedicate it to them  
with our love.*

# HOW TO DO MISSION ACTION PLANNING

*A vision-centred approach*



Mike Chew and Mark Ireland



First published in Great Britain in 2009

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge  
36 Causton Street  
London SW1P 4ST  
www.spckpublishing.co.uk

Copyright © Mike Chew and Mark Ireland 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

SPCK does not necessarily endorse the individual views contained in its publications.

The author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the external website and email addresses included in this book are correct and up to date at the time of going to press. The author and publisher are not responsible for the content, quality or continuing accessibility of the sites.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicized Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, a member of the Hachette Livre UK Group.

All rights reserved.

‘NIV’ is a registered trademark of International Bible Society.  
UK trademark number 1448790.

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-281-06122-8

Typeset by Graphicraft Limited, Hong Kong  
First printed in Great Britain by Ashford Colour Press  
Subsequently digitally printed in Great Britain

Produced on paper from sustainable forests

# Contents



<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	vi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>Foreword by Bishop David, Lord Hope of Thornes KCVO</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xii
1 Setting the scene	1
2 Reflecting on our experience – at St John’s, Baxenden	15
3 Theological reflections on MAP	33
4 How does MAP fit with other recent approaches to mission?	49
5 Producing a Mission Action Plan – step by step	56
6 Case examples	83
7 MAP as part of a diocesan growth strategy	98
8 MAP resources and further information	127
9 Conclusions	131
<i>Appendix 1</i> MAP workshop outline	135
<i>Appendix 2</i> MAP templates	139
<i>Notes</i>	145

# *Figures and Tables*



## **Figures**

2.1	St John the Baptist Church, Baxenden	16
2.2	Baxenden usual Sunday attendance: 1967–1988	19
2.3	Baxenden usual Sunday attendance: 1967–1994	23
2.4	Baxenden usual Sunday attendance: 1988–1996	25
3.1	The milk barrel	38
4.1	Bishop Alan Smith’s model of approaches/groups	50
4.2	Building on Bishop Alan Smith’s model	54
5.1	Diagram illustrating the MAP process	59
5.2	The key stages of the Review phase	60
5.3	Sample ‘Healthy Church’ profile (St Anne’s 2007)	63
5.4	Sample NCD church profile (St Cuthbert’s)	64
5.5	The key stages of the Choose phase	68
5.6	The key stages of the Plan phase	73
5.7	The ‘When’ method to identify and structure Plans	74
5.8	The key stages in the Act phase	76
5.9	The Action–Reflection learning/theological cycle	78
7.1	The ‘Living the Gospel’ process cycle	105
7.2	Usual Sunday attendance for Lichfield diocese	115
7.3	Usual Sunday attendance, Shrewsbury Area of Lichfield diocese	116
7.4	Usual Sunday attendance, Walsall Area of Lichfield diocese	117
7.5	Blackburn diocese Mission and Vision statements, 2004	118
7.6	The impact of ‘Shared Vision’	119
7.7	Comparing uSa growth rates 2005–06 for churches in Blackburn diocese	124

*Figures and Tables*

7.8	Comparing uSa growth rates 2006–07 for churches in Blackburn diocese	125
7.9	Growth rates for churches in Blackburn diocese 2006–07: impact on uSa of LYCiG	125
7.10	Growth rates for churches in Blackburn diocese 2006–07: impact on uSa of the ‘Child Friendly Church Award’	126
8.1	The Church MAP website logo (< <a href="http://www.churchmaps.co.uk">http://www.churchmaps.co.uk</a> >)	128

**Tables**

1.1	Diocesan growth initiatives	7
7.1	Some questions posed in the booklet <i>Living the Gospel</i>	104

## *Acknowledgements*



We are very grateful to all those who have so willingly shared their hard-won experience and expertise – particularly to:

- Those dioceses that have contributed material to us and have been willing for it to be published on the <<http://www.churchmaps.co.uk>> website.
- Peter Hill, whose initial research into MAP provided materials for the churchmaps website and helped to spark the idea of producing this book.
- Roger Longworth who gave his time to become the web-master of churchmaps.
- Bishop David Hope, for offering to write the Foreword.
- Those who have contributed ideas and suggestions during the writing process, especially Richard Adams, Damian Feeney, +Nicholas Reade, Godfrey Stone, Robert Warren and Paul Wordsworth.

*Mark Ireland and Mike Chew*

## *Foreword*



One of the many and daunting tasks with which any bishop is charged at his ordination is that he should not only 'lead in serving and caring for the people of God' but that he should also 'promote' the Church's mission throughout the world.

It was therefore in the context of the primacy of mission and evangelization that in each of the dioceses in which I have been privileged to serve I have sought to take some initiative which would fulfil the charge which I had been given and thereby encourage and further that mission entrusted to us by Christ to announce the Kingdom and make disciples.

The first opportunity came when as Bishop of my place of birth – Wakefield – the diocese celebrated its centenary. Together with the then staff team we launched an initiative which encouraged each parish quite literally to produce a map – a geographical map – of its parish area and to mark on it where the church was and where church members came from and where other important gathering places – shops, clubs, schools, pubs etc. – were in relation to the church. This in itself was both educative and revealing, not least to members of the church! This 'map', we suggested, should be displayed at the entrance of every church with words of welcome, together with photographs of people and places, also that the 'map' itself be used as a basis for discussion and planning for mission as the diocese, in celebrating one hundred years, looked ahead to the next hundred!

The 'maps' which came to be produced both in London and York were of a rather different nature. Having spent a good deal of time visiting and listening in the first instance in each of the dioceses, I concluded that what was needed was something

## *Foreword*

which would not only bring some sense of unity, cohesion and coherence to the diocese itself but also encourage parishes to begin to look forward rather than backward (to the supposedly good old days!), and to help them identify and deliver some modest and realistic priorities for mission.

The ‘MAP’ process (Mission Action Planning) is well described by Mark Ireland and Mike Chew in this excellent book and I am enormously grateful that they have taken the time and the care to enquire more deeply both into the process and into some of the outcomes now in a number of dioceses.

I would never wish to claim too much for the ‘MAP’ initiative; furthermore I would never wish to impose too tight a straightjacket on its implementation – each diocese is different and each diocese, as with each parish, cluster, locality – call it what you will – will hopefully find this book helpful, useful and encouraging and adapt its content in seeking to further the mission entrusted to the church in every place and in so many different and varied settings.

One of my hopes would be that from this ‘bottom-up’ approach, as it were, listening to the priorities arising from the parishes and other places where the Church has a presence, it might be possible both to reorganize and restructure the organization of the diocese itself – even, dare I say it, of the Church of England nationally! For I am convinced, and not least in these present days and times, that we still need drastically both to lighten and to simplify the structures which can so often be a hindrance rather than a help to mission.

I am glad to be able to commend this lively and encouraging presentation by Mark Ireland and Mike Chew in the hope that it will both stimulate and challenge others to implement the process they describe, not simply as an end in itself, but rather by way of celebrating the many gifts God has given to each one of us, thus equipping ‘the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity

*Foreword*

of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ' (Ephesians 4.12–13).

*+David  
Lord Hope of Thornes KCVO*

## *Preface*

---

A significant and growing number of churches in the UK and increasingly in other countries<sup>1</sup> are using the principles of Mission Action Planning (MAP). What is MAP? How do you do MAP? Is it just a management speak fad? Or is it an approach which is well grounded biblically and theologically? Is there any objective evidence from those parishes and dioceses which have used MAP that it is useful?

This is the first book which has been dedicated to MAP, and the process for producing a high-quality plan. It argues the case for producing a MAP, describes a practical ongoing process, gives practical examples, and provides evidence of the effectiveness of the process. It is based on research conducted in several dioceses of the Church of England – at diocesan and parish levels. The book is intended for clergy and lay leaders of churches – large or small – of all traditions.

There are many books published in the private and public sectors about developing strategy and improvement plans; and also many books have been published in recent years about the mission of the Church. This book is an attempt to bring these two strands together, written by people with experience in secular management and local church leadership.

# 1

## *Setting the scene*



### *What is MAP?*

A ‘Mission Action Plan’ is a document which outlines the mission activities that a local church is going to do in the coming months and years. It is built on a clear sense of God’s ‘vision’ for the church – what God is calling the church to be and to do. So a MAP provides exactly what it says on the tin – an action plan for mission. Churches have been doing this for years, but most have found that the work involved is not as easy as it sounds. For a start, what is meant by ‘mission’? How does a busy church decide on priorities? How does a traditional church prepare its people for doing new things? How does a church council agree and manage the many actions that may ensue?

What we are talking about here is strategic planning – something which businesses, schools, hospitals and most other organizations have to address every year. This is crucial work for them – if they get it right, they can thrive; if they get it wrong, they may face problems. They certainly don’t carry on as they are – because ‘business as usual’<sup>1</sup> will mean that they will probably miss opportunities and will underperform. To an outsider, the work may seem very obvious, but for a member of the board or management team, it is likely to be the hardest work that they do. Research is needed, reviews have to be conducted, options must be explored, priorities have to be assessed, resource plans must be made and decisions have to be taken.

## *Setting the scene*

Finally, detailed action plans can be drawn up: but that is not the end. There is a need to communicate to all stakeholders, and the methods for tracking progress must be worked out in advance. This ‘strategic planning process’ – the way of producing the strategic plan – is carefully managed by these organizations and the process is improved year by year. It is the largest market for business and management consultants.

### **What will a Mission Action Plan do?**

A MAP makes sure the life and work of your church is:

- **Purposeful**
  - Doing what you are convinced is needed
- **Developing**
  - Always improving how you do these things
- **Focussed**
  - Not distracted by less important things.<sup>2</sup>

Every church has a vital role to play in building God’s Kingdom, and therefore the same need for strategic planning – as a spiritual exercise – seeking to determine God’s will for their future. In the church, however, all too often this is not given sufficient time in a busy programme – and there is a danger of becoming introspective, missing opportunities, taking on too much work because of a lack of priority planning, and overstretching a leadership team, made up largely of volunteers.

The church MAP is a summary of its mission strategy. It is tailored to the particular circumstances of the individual church, because it builds from the church Mission and Vision statements – its purpose and its desired future. Priorities are identified, and also those things which are not as urgent. The plans are kept alive by frequent reviews, and those involved can become enthusiastic about improving how they are serving God.

## *Setting the scene*

The MAP is a living document, and is usually communicated frequently to church members to build support for mission priorities, to invite people to pray for these, to encourage people to engage where help is needed and to prepare people for changes that are planned.

The method used to create a MAP – the MAP process – guides a church council through the hard work of producing a strategy for mission. It is divided into four phases: Review, Choose, Plan and Act. We introduce each of these later in this chapter, and they are covered in detail in Chapter 5.

### *Origins of MAP – David Hope*

The origins of the phrase ‘mission action planning’ can be traced back to the arrival of David Hope in the diocese of London in the early 1990s. Faced with a huge diocese very divided over women priests and with acute money problems, Bishop David devised Agenda for Action, to establish four agreed mission priorities for the diocese. These were:

- 1 Worship and Prayer
- 2 Care and Service
- 3 Teaching and Nurture
- 4 Mission and Evangelism.

The staffing and finances of the diocese were then extensively refocused (with the loss of some diocesan boards and councils) to resource these mission priorities at local level. Each deanery and parish was then invited to follow a similar process, and to choose a few realistic targets which they wanted to set themselves in the light of the overall diocesan vision. Bishop David wanted to hear what people ‘on the ground’ wanted to do, so he invited parishes to send their plans to him. He planned to use their responses to further reshape the diocesan structures. For example, he noticed that some very good work with young people was going on in different places, and asked whether it

### *Setting the scene*

was possible to bring the leaders together to share and learn from each other, and to offer advice for other parishes – but not to create a central structure. In other areas of parish work also, he wanted groups from strong parishes to help weaker ones. His overall aim was to help people to get away from thinking of internal domestic things and move on to become a church on the move – a pilgrim people travelling light.

Early in his time as Bishop of Wakefield, David Hope attended a course on leadership and teams, led by business guru John Adair,<sup>3</sup> which he found inspiring. Adair's seven marks of a high-performance team particularly got him thinking about how to lead a diocese and how a local minister could lead a church into mission work. The marks highlighted were:

- 1 Clear realistic objectives
- 2 Shared sense of purpose
- 3 Best use of resources
- 4 Atmosphere of openness
- 5 Reviews progress
- 6 Builds on experience
- 7 Rides out storms together.

Listening was a key part of David Hope's strategy. Spending time in the parishes, he encouraged them to be realistic about what they could achieve. He felt that the diocesan structure was a massive empire which needed to be dismantled, and after a process of visiting every deanery and listening to the parishes to learn what they believed they were being called to do, he then set about the task of restructuring the diocesan organization to serve the emerging vision. Putting resources back into the parishes through grants and local advisers meant taking them away from other areas, including industrial mission. One of his key phrases was 'prune for growth'.

David Hope's approach is interesting in that he encouraged a two-way dialogue, writing personally to those who had completed MAPs, and producing a report after the first year,

### *Setting the scene*

feeding back to the parishes what they had said. Acknowledging that some parishes wanted nothing to do with MAP, he commented, ‘We didn’t force it: I thought – if it was good, it would spread by word of mouth.’

A key part of the MAP initiative was the half-day visits by senior clergy to each parish and deanery, followed by a return on the following Sunday to lead the people in worship – so that the bishops and archdeacons were seen to be listening to them and alongside them in mission. The parishes’ willingness to engage with the MAP process was in part a response to a personal relationship with the bishop or leader who had come to them. This incarnational ‘alongside’ dimension of David Hope’s approach to MAP models something crucial about the leader as ‘servant/coach’ rather than as top-down manager, and helps to explain why 70 per cent of parishes responded to his invitation to produce a MAP, compared with the usual 40–50 per cent response to any request from the Bishop.

The London thing was very rudimentary – I was feeling my way a bit. What I really wanted to achieve was to give the diocese some sense of cohesion and coherence in terms of mission, and to try to change the whole ethos of the diocese. People had become disheartened, and were keen for a fresh vision and a change from arguments about women priests and gay priests.

David Hope was only in London for four years before his move to York, but the MAP process he had initiated was continued by Richard Chartres. When interviewed, David Hope said he believed that mission action planning contributed significantly to reversing the downward attendance spiral in the diocese – ‘It wouldn’t have happened without MAP’<sup>4</sup>

### *Growth of the MAP phenomenon*

The diocese of Lichfield adapted and adopted the London MAP model as part of its new strategy *Going for Growth*.

## *Setting the scene*

Other dioceses quickly followed suit and now there are a growing number of dioceses that are using MAP (or similar approach) as part of their diocesan strategy (see Table 1.1).

In addition to those mentioned in the table, several other dioceses have contacted us for information about MAP and to share thoughts and ideas about Church Growth strategy. When David Hope moved to York as Archbishop, he took the concept of MAP with him. His experience there is discussed in Chapter 7. Now, almost half the dioceses in the Church of England have some sort of mission strategy initiative, and most of these use the term ‘Mission Action Planning’ as the key tool for individual churches.

### *Introducing the MAP process cycle*

The MAP process provides the way in to MAP work – in order to answer the practical question, ‘How do we produce a MAP?’ At its most fundamental, the process phases are:

- 1 Review your situation
- 2 Choose future priorities
- 3 Make plans
- 4 Act on the plans

. . . with prayer running all the way through each phase. MAP work is strategic work: it’s about the long-term future of the church; it’s about church growth and development, perhaps doing new things, rather than the essential issues of maintenance. Therefore, the MAP work should be carried out by the leadership of the church – normally the minister and church council (or a sub-group from the council). This section contains a basic MAP process description – perhaps suitable for a church that is doing this work for the first time. In Chapter 5, we describe a more in-depth process which could be used as a whole, or in part to add to the basic process.

**Table 1.1 Diocesan growth initiatives**

<i>Diocese</i>	<i>Start year</i>	<i>Website description</i>	<i>Main parish tool</i>
London	1993	Agenda for Action	MAP
York	1999	Living the Gospel	MAP
Lichfield	2003	Going for Growth	MAP
Llandaff	2004	Mission Action Planning	MAP
Blackburn	2004	Going for Growth	MAP
Portsmouth	2004	Kairos	Kairos Process
Coventry	2005	Shaping the church for Mission	Eight Questions
Exeter	2005	Mission Action Planning	MAP
Leicester	2005	Mission Partnerships	Mission Partnerships
Southwell	2005	Shaping the Future	Mission Values, Challenges and Questions
Newcastle	2006	Mission Action Planning	MAP
Carlisle	2006	Survival to Revival	Deanery Deployment Planning
Chichester	2007	Putting mission on the MAP in Chichester	MAP
Norwich	2007	Committed to Growth	Growth Plan
Ripon/Leeds	2007	Together in Mission visits	Toolkit for Mission
Ely	2008	Mission Action Planning	MAP
Wakefield	2008	Transforming Lives in Wakefield Diocese	Transformational Plan
Chester	2009	Growth Action Plan	GAP
Birmingham	2009	Mission Strategy	MAP
Guildford	2009	Growing Communities of Faith & Engagement	Self-evaluation resource

## *Foreword*

which would not only bring some sense of unity, cohesion and coherence to the diocese itself but also encourage parishes to begin to look forward rather than backward (to the supposedly good old days!), and to help them identify and deliver some modest and realistic priorities for mission.

The ‘MAP’ process (Mission Action Planning) is well described by Mark Ireland and Mike Chew in this excellent book and I am enormously grateful that they have taken the time and the care to enquire more deeply both into the process and into some of the outcomes now in a number of dioceses.

I would never wish to claim too much for the ‘MAP’ initiative; furthermore I would never wish to impose too tight a straightjacket on its implementation – each diocese is different and each diocese, as with each parish, cluster, locality – call it what you will – will hopefully find this book helpful, useful and encouraging and adapt its content in seeking to further the mission entrusted to the church in every place and in so many different and varied settings.

One of my hopes would be that from this ‘bottom-up’ approach, as it were, listening to the priorities arising from the parishes and other places where the Church has a presence, it might be possible both to reorganize and restructure the organization of the diocese itself – even, dare I say it, of the Church of England nationally! For I am convinced, and not least in these present days and times, that we still need drastically both to lighten and to simplify the structures which can so often be a hindrance rather than a help to mission.

I am glad to be able to commend this lively and encouraging presentation by Mark Ireland and Mike Chew in the hope that it will both stimulate and challenge others to implement the process they describe, not simply as an end in itself, but rather by way of celebrating the many gifts God has given to each one of us, thus equipping ‘the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity