

Introducing the MAP process style

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 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: whole, or in part to add to the basic process.

Phase 1 Review your situation

The first task is to see the church's current situation as God would see it: listing those things that are good and working well, and those things which are not so good. To do this it is useful to devise ways to listen in three directions:

1. listening up – to God,
2. listening in – to church members, and
3. listening out – to the local communities and networks that the church serves.

Write down a summary of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

The second task is to reflect on what is the main purpose of the church:

- Why does the church exist?
- What particular purposes does it serve?
- How does it relate to the community?
- What does it believe in?

Perhaps the church already has a 'Mission statement' – which captures a sense of these. If not, consider how you can produce a statement which everyone can support. This should be limited to one sentence. For example, 'Christ Church is here to share the love of Jesus Christ with all ages in this community:

Phase 2 Choose future priorities

While Phase 1 is concerned with the present time, Phase 2 is all about the future. People may have many ideas about what the church could be doing, but resources are finite and choices have to be made. The first step is to describe a vision of what the church could become in five years. You want this to be God's vision for your church, so prayer is essential. You also want this to be an attainable vision- not an impossible dream. An example Vision statement might read: 'St Anne's will become a church community where all members are growing in faith and using their special gifts to spread Jesus' saving love:

A good vision statement, shared and taken on board by your people, can inspire everyone to work together towards their future, so it is crucial that the church leadership enthusiastically

buy in to it. So here again, this is a task for the minister and leadership to do together.

The second step in this phase is to work out the priorities to achieve the vision. This is best done in two stages – first consider the long-term (five-year) priorities, and then break this down into the priorities for the next year. In this way, you will be able to review progress every year, and to identify the next priorities. It may be tempting to take on too much, so be cautious. It is a good idea to restrict the number of discrete strategic priorities to three for an average church, and less where resources are limited. This is also a good time to consider what activities could be stopped or trimmed – especially if these are not central to the church vision. Finally, write a goal statement for each of the first-year priorities, which defines specifically 'what' has to be achieved by 'when'.

Phase 3 Make plans

During the planning phase, each priority can be taken in turn and fleshed out into the main actions that are necessary to reach the goal. For example, if the goal is 'To introduce an Emmaus nurture course within the next twelve months', the action list could be:

What	Who	When
Raise funding and purchase materials	AB	By end June
Identify and train group leaders	Minister	by end September
Publicize the course and invite people to join	HJ	from May
Start groups	Leaders	in October

Notice that it helps to identify the person responsible for the action, and the timescale. These are the 'top-level' actions, suitable for including in the MAP summary report; each one of these could be broken down into more detail by the owner of the action at a later date.

The MAP summary report can now be written. It should contain the main details of each of the work done in the three MAP process phases, but it should also be fairly brief and easy to read – two sides of A4 is ideal. The report should be widely communicated, with copies made available for all church members and key members of the local community.

Phase 4 Act on the plans

This is where the practical work gets done. During the Act phase, it is vital that there are regular reviews of progress – perhaps at church council meetings – to ensure that the people involved are supported and encouraged in their work. It may be found necessary to revisit the plans in the light of work done so far. For completed actions, it is useful to review whether the desired outcomes have come to pass, and plan any follow-on work. Finally, give thanks and celebrate!