



MISSION ACTION PLAN – THE MAP

WHERE ARE WE

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO

HOW TO GET THERE



PREPARING THE MISSION ACTION PLAN (MAP)

PARTICIPATION and CONSULTATION

It is very important for a Church community that when a plan is being prepared as many members as possible feel they have been able to contribute to the discussion. Their views need to be taken into account. That does not necessarily mean that everyone's opinions and ideas will automatically be included. There will be issues on which differences of opinion will exist. What is required is to consider the varying opinions and reach as broad a consensus as possible. The plan preparation process therefore needs to provide opportunities for views to be contributed, and the various options and ways forward openly discussed. The PCC clearly has a key role in considering and approving any final document, but it is anxious to ensure that the process of preparation is as transparent as possible. It therefore agreed the following at a meeting on 3rd March 2014:

Participation and the MAP development process

- i. The draft MAP and the development process envisaged would be introduced at the APCM. It is not intended to debate the issues then, but to make people aware of the importance of the exercise, what is to be considered and how views can be expressed.
- ii. The various Church committees and groups will be invited to consider and comment on the draft. Individuals will also be offered the opportunity to comment.
- iii. It will be important to gather views from people not currently closely involved in church life about what they hoped for from St Barnabas. A separate set of questions will be prepared aimed towards their experience of Church rather than the internal working of the Church itself.
- iv. It will be emphasised that all contributions to the discussion will be addressed to the PCC and will be treated as public documents. This is to ensure the transparency of the process.
- v. A special event will be organised in late June/early July to bring as many people as possible together to consider the issues facing the Church and their preferences for ways forward. *
- vi. A draft of the final document will be produced after the holiday season. How this might be handled can be considered in the light of outcomes from the special event.

*Now fixed for Saturday 5th July

Comments on the MAP should reach Bill Harper (PCC Secretary) by 9th May. Submissions can be made by email (bill.harper@btinternet.com), by post to 37 Kidmore End Road, RG4 8SN or left at the back of the church.

SECTION 1 THE CHURCH – ITS ORGANISATION AND ACTIVITIES

DRAWING THE MAP

1.1 The MAP will look at the future of the Church (and Benefice). The problem is that “the Church” can mean different things which require different approaches and outcomes. The three elements of “Church” are seen to be:

- i. Church as Community –people with a common interest in seeking God and following Jesus. Each individual can be looked at as a Disciple – a follower of Christ – with something to gain from being with others and something to offer to the community of Disciples.
- ii. Church as Institution – referring to the structures, organisation and procedures needed to manage conduct and activities.
- iii. Church – the building.

1.2 Of these, the first is seen to be the primary and most important expression of “Church”. Meeting the needs of people, making use of what they offer and developing their relationships with one another are at the core of church life. However, the other elements must be taken into account.

The Church as a Disciple Community

1.3 A focus for planning can be provided by the five “Marks of Mission” used by the Church of England. These will be the “Mission Activities” covered in the MAP.

- i. Proclaim the good news
- ii. Teach, baptise and nurture
- iii. Loving service
- iv. Transform unjust structures of society
- v. Safeguard the integrity of creation.

1.4 The Mission Plan reviews current activity and future options/proposals against these headings. It distinguishes externally focussed (Outreach) and internally focussed activities. Attention is given to what people need/want from the Church and what talents they can offer. An important part of Mission Planning is to get inputs from as wide a range of people as possible.

1.5 Proclaim the Good News (Effective communication of the Gospel by words and actions)

- (i) The activities involved here primarily externally focussed – Outreach. This will cover Alpha, Outreach Services and public communications (mainly the Newsletter and the website).
- (ii) Elements of regular worship are linked to this activity, but worship is covered below.
- (iii) Many of the Parish Centre activities aim to reach out to people who would not normally come to Sunday worship. However, no overt efforts are made to

evangelise – the hope being that people will feel drawn to explore the religious life of the Church at their own pace. The activities themselves are covered below.

1.6 Teach, Baptise and Nurture (Creating an environment for lifelong worship for all ages)

Worship – service patterns

Fellowship Groups

Baptisms and baptism visiting

Provision for children and young people

Weddings

Music activities

Lent courses

Puppet Ministry

School links

1.7 Loving Service (Care through pastoral ministry to people locally and the wider human community)

The activities under this heading include:

Parish Centre activities

Pastoral care

Funerals

Charitable activities

1.8 Transform unjust structures of society (Social justice)

No significant activity at present

1.9 Safeguard the integrity of creation (Environment)

Only related to building management at present

Church as Institution

1.10 The Church as Community cannot avoid having an organisation to manage and control its activity. The local institution probably comprises the Ministry Team, the Office Holders and the PCC. (Individuals and resources engaged in Mission activity are dealt with as part of community above.) External requirements such as Health & Safety and Child Protection are directed at the institution. The position of the local Church within the wider national institution needs to be recognised, but probably does not need extensive attention.

Provision of baptism, wedding and funeral services for people who are not regular churchgoers comes under this heading, as does general pastoral care for parishioners when requested. It is important to remember that we are by definition a 'parish church'. The vicar has the 'cure of souls' for the entire parish/benefice. This does distinguish us from other church denominations as an institution. Historically our core value is mission.

Church Building

1.11 There will be an ongoing need to maintain the condition of the buildings, fittings and equipment. There will be an environmental care element involved.

Benefice Dimensions

1.12 There will be some common ground with Caversham Park Church in Outreach activity (adjacent areas) and nurturing (to maximise resources and create critical mass for some activities). Institutional and building issues will be distinct for each Church. *(The content of this Section, and perhaps other aspects of the MAP, will be influenced by developments at Caversham Park.)*

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT of the CURRENT SITUATION – AREAS FOR DISCUSSION

WHERE WE ARE

This section is currently based on views and issues known at Standing Committee and PCC level. Part of the wider debate on the MAP will aim to capture other opinions.

THE CHURCH as COMMUNITY

2.1 Over recent years we would like to think that St Barnabas has changed from being a relatively closed worshipping community to a more visible and open (literally and figuratively) Church active in the local community. This has been facilitated by the provision of the Parish Centre, although as we always say it is the people (the Church Community) who make the Centre effective rather than the building itself. The Parish Centre activities are seen to be popular and appreciated.

In terms of communications the public distribution of the Newsletter has been a success.

The Alpha courses have been well supported and received.

Extensive provisions are made for children and young people – something that not all churches can claim.

Against national trends numbers attending and on the electoral roll are being sustained – even increased.

2.2 Much has been achieved and as a Church St Barnabas is in good health and has much to give thanks for. We are not producing a plan to solve problems. It is because the best time to look forward is from a stable present. (Check the roof when the sun is shining.) Having some security should not lead to complacency:

There are always things that might be done better

There is always more that could be done

Nothing should be taken for granted

The purpose of the MAP is to identify areas that must be sustained and areas that have the potential for development having regard to the resources available.

For Discussion – Things we could improve or develop?

2.3 Outreach

Our approach to outreach is embodied in our “Open Church” arrangements and increased communication, principally the public editions of the Newsletter and the web site which are being managed without as much help as we would like. The aim is to make people aware that we are here and to welcome them in ways that they feel comfortable with when they come to us. It would always be possible in principle to widen and deepen the Parish Centre activities and continue with Alpha and similar activities.

We have contacts with local schools and are supporting the RE Inspired initiative.

There is scope for us to better publicise ourselves – particularly by improving contacts with local media.

The guidance offered by the Diocese for the MAP process included lots of ideas for helping people to meet God. In general terms we do fulfil many of the ways of reaching out, although it would always be possible to increase the extent and variety of activity if

resources were available. The one type of activity that is not carried out is physically going out into the community, e.g. prayer visiting from door to door. Is there any need or appetite for this type of activity? *Are there any other initiatives that are obviously missing and we should be considering?*

2.4 Worship

There is a deeply established tradition of Eucharistic worship at St Barnabas. Interestingly this is implied by the way we organise our most of our services rather than explicitly stated in any of the public statements we make about ourselves.

Festival Services continue to be well attended by a wider range of people. Services for special groups (schools, scouts and guides) are well supported.

Special periodic outreach services are arranged (notably under the “Back to Church” initiatives), but there is little evidence of their effectiveness.

The Study and Discussion Group have asked that consideration be given to Healing Services. Questions continue to be raised about whether the Family Service really fulfils its function of appealing to all ages and varying levels of connection with the Church. The CYP Committee in their meeting Notes have offered some ideas for consideration:

“First Sunday. It was agreed that the first Sunday will be a more memorable date (than the second Sunday), and less prone to clashing with other special events. The pattern of special services in 2014 means that the idea cannot be implemented until June. This will be put forward as a firm proposal as part of the Mission Planning.

Non-Eucharistic Service. The general feeling is that the Eucharist makes the service long and less geared to families with children. However, such a change cannot be made without the wider congregation being given the opportunity to comment.”

(See also below for “Messy Church”)

2.5 Children and Young People

Whilst the overall population might be aging, the pressure on school places locally shows that the number of families with younger children is not declining. Looking to promote inclusivity for children and young people two issues have been suggested for consideration: (i) Use of “Messy Church” which has been successfully introduced elsewhere. It is a form of church that involves creativity, celebration, and hospitality. It is primarily aimed at those of all ages unfamiliar with church services, whether traditional or modern. The basic components are a creative time to explore a biblical theme, a celebration time in story, prayer and song, a communal meal. It is an event, not simply a service. It is probably best to think of its philosophy in a similar way to Alpha.

(ii) Adoption of the “Children and Communion” provisions. This would explore issues of inclusivity for those children and families familiar to some degree with services, or who are becoming increasingly familiar. Its core value is not comprehension but grace, which has been historically recognised in infant baptism in the Church of England.

Do we feel we need to make our worship – or some elements of worship – more understandable and welcoming for those coming fresh to our Church? What options exist to modify and/or supplement what we do? Should the core elements of Eucharistic worship remain untouched and other provision made for those who may not feel immediately comfortable with our worship settings?

2.6 Inclusion

This term is used to acknowledge that we should offer a welcome to everyone without reference to gender, age, colour, sexual orientation, handicap, etc. This goes beyond receiving anyone warmly when they come to us, but also in making them comfortable in the way we use language and make provision for diversity. (See also 3.5)

Is this an area where we should be doing more – and if so what?

2.7 Fellowship Groups

There are active Fellowship Groups which play a valuable role in creating less formal settings within which Church members can build relationships and grow together, but only a minority of church members are actively involved.

Efforts were made in the past to make wider and more structured use of small groups. They can have the potential to fulfil communication and pastoral care functions as well as study, discussion and social activities. To be fully effective that needs a more complete coverage of the regular and not-so-regular congregation. These wider roles would require more time spent on administration and organising activities.

Do the Fellowship groups need restructuring again to include all members? Should they be the main point of focus for pastoral care or not? Key issue: Leadership.

2.8 Pastoral Care/Visiting

The role of the Baptism Visitors has recently been clarified. If the Fellowship groups are not reviewed then another possible route for pastoral care in the future would be to have a team of trained lay pastoral visitors. This will take time to establish and require people to come forward to take on the role.

2.9 Transforming unjust structures of society

Safeguarding the integrity of creation

St Barnabas does very little about these two “Marks of Mission”. More was done when two congregation members acted as “Champions” for these areas. (See 3.4 below on the reliance placed on finding volunteers.)

THE CHURCH as INSTITUTION

2.10 The Church’s administrative structures and processes work reasonably well:

- i. Almost all the Officer posts are filled (the exception being one Churchwarden) and the Assistant idea is helping with warden and treasurer responsibilities
- ii. The PCC currently has a full membership, but the number of elected representatives is to be increased. The move to four meetings in a year has not adversely affected decision taking, but does produce heavy agendas. Efforts are made to make the working of the PCC accessible to the congregation.
- iii. Compliance with external regulatory requirements is good. (Health & Safety, food hygiene, child protection, independently examined accounts, completion of Diocesan information returns, etc.)
- iv. There is active participation at Deanery and Diocesan level.
- v. The Church’s finances are sound and well managed.

2.11 A significant change will come about when Elizabeth Gash retires as LLM at the end of 2014. This will mean that a number of worship and pastoral duties will need to be taken up by others, or be discontinued. Steps are being taken to bring forward Mark Burton for LLM

training. Even if that process is successfully concluded, it will take several years, so there will be a time when the St Barnabas has no LLM. What everyone must realise is that the vicar cannot take on an ever increasing work load.

CHURCH BUILDING

2.12 The last quinquennial inspection was carried out in 2011. The church building is generally in good condition, and the repair items that were identified have largely been completed. The next foreseeable major job will be the redecoration of the chancel, which will need to be carried out by contractors. There will be advantages in carrying out the work at the same time as the proposed work on the refurbishment of the organ, but that can only happen if sufficient money is available.

The Parish Centre continues to experience water penetration problems, and other more minor problems – often as the result of inadequacies in the standard of the original building work. The hope is that the water problems can be dealt with during 2014 at reasonable cost, but there is always the possibility that more major spending will be needed.

The project for the refurbishment of the organ is at the stage of detailed planning, authorisation and fund raising.

SECTION 3 EXTERNAL INFLUENCES and EVENTS – AREAS FOR DISCUSSION

WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO US ON THE WAY

This Section looks at things that will affect various aspects of the Church.

3.1 Public attitudes to the Church

In very broad terms it appears that people (and particularly younger people) are not so enamoured with what the “conventional” churches offer, but still have some interest in/awareness of spiritual needs. The evidence in the Church of England is that where growth is occurring it is generally associated with new forms or expressions of “Church”. Our experience seems to confirm this, if it is our efforts to make provision beyond Sunday mornings that have maintained the numbers. *The question is – If this assessment is correct should we try to go further with different forms of Church and to make what we do more accessible?*

3.2 Ageing Population

The changing age structure of the population – with the proportion of older people increasing – has two implications:

- i. The numbers of older people in the local community is likely increase, and their needs for spiritual and social support must be a priority in what we seek to offer to the wider community.
- ii. The same change is occurring in the church membership, and of more concern is that it is the core of members who are most active in activities and management who are getting older. Elizabeth Gash retires at the end of the year, and it is likely that over the coming years others will need to reduce or cease their participation. There will be a limit to how much the remaining active members can take on. This factor will affect the Church both as Community and Institution.

3.3 Cost Pressures

It is likely that the Parish Share and energy costs (at least) will continue to rise in real terms in the coming years. These are substantial costs for St Barnabas and will put pressure on its finances.

Responding to pressure on resources.

3.4 Whilst pressure on resources is almost inevitable, its specific impacts cannot be foreseen. It is therefore not possible to make plans for particular occurrences. What can be discussed, however, are the areas where resource issues are likely to arise and what approaches might be adopted to tackle them.

- i. Volunteering. St Barnabas – like all churches – is reliant on large numbers of people contributing their time and talents to maintain all the various activities go to make up a busy Church. Keeping all the required activities staffed has been an ongoing problem, although we have been fortunate in maintaining almost all activity. This may change if we identify new needs and the pool of volunteers reduces as they grow older. We do rely on individuals to offer themselves when needs are identified.

Responses are sometimes “encouraged” by informal approaches to individuals when certain jobs need to be undertaken. The problem with this “softer” approach is that if the response is not there the need can remain unfulfilled. The benefit of is that motivations are generally good and no-one needs feel unduly pressured. The outcome may be high priority tasks and needs that are not met, and resources continue to be devoted to lower priority activities. For those who are capable of contributing the stance may have to change from “What would you like to do?” to “This is what needs doing”.

- ii. Leadership. Whilst many people are happy to be given a task to do, the need for individuals able to manage and organise activities is more difficult to fulfil. This requirement will become more pressing as Ministry Team resources diminish. Efforts are being made to keep the workload of these types of responsibilities at reasonable levels. We need to look at whether forms of training can be offered. Congregation members do need to accept, however, that if leadership roles cannot be filled the capability of the Church to fulfil its ambitions will be diminished.
- iii. Financial giving. In the past we have not needed to put much stress on the importance of regular giving, and have given priority to financing projects – currently the Organ Project. This is forecast to change in the future as costs rise. As with volunteering, we have relied on people to offer their donations without much guidance on what might be expected. There are regular congregation members who are not regular givers. (22 out of 131 on the electoral roll are not individual donors or part of a contributing family.) Statistics about the 92 who do give regularly indicate the wide disparity in levels of giving:

Less than £20 per month	36%
£20 to £49 per month	36%
£50 to £99 per month	19%
£100 per month or more	9%

The 9% provide 30% of the income. Individual circumstances do vary widely, but Emmer Green is not a deprived area.

Should more guidance be given on relating giving to ability to pay?

Developing Disciples

3.5 At the beginning of the document the Church was identified as a community. As our Ministry resources reduce the lay members must play a greater part if the community to be sustained and developed. For all those able to contribute in whatever way, developing as a Disciple will mean moving beyond “churchgoing” to being active in service.

What should we do to encourage this development?

The Wider Church

3.5 As numbers in ministry decline and finances are under pressure across the board, it seems inevitable that ministers will be spread more thinly. National level discussions on women bishops, attitudes to gender and to marriage may seem unlikely to reverberate much here at local level. However, we do have the opportunity to think in our own context about the principles and practices of inclusion that are involved. Proposals for changes to the Baptism liturgy are to be trialled in order for it to be more inclusive to those unfamiliar with religious terminology, but are unlikely to require change locally in the foreseeable future.

The Benefice Dimension

3.6 St Barnabas and Caversham Park have been working to build links, e.g. the joint Newsletter, the Benefice services, joint Standing Committee meetings. Caversham Park is facing major challenges – not least because they are being hit hard by retirements. The status and future of CP is now under review by the partner denominations. There could be major changes ahead which cannot be foreseen at present. *If the situation becomes clearer within the timescale for preparation of this MAP, it can be modified as required. In the meantime it remains important for St Barnabas to plan for its independent situation*

SECTION 4 CONCLUSIONS, AIMS FOR THE FUTURE and AREAS FOR ACTION

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO? HOW TO GET THERE?

This Section will record the nature of the discussions and the conclusions reached on the various issues and ideas raised above. Grouped according to the "Marks of Mission" these currently are:

Proclaim the Good News (Outreach)

- 2.3 Outreach Can we expand our publicity? Can we further develop Parish Centre activities? Should we be going out into the community?
- 2.4 Worship Should we look at our forms of service, particularly the Family Service, to make them more accessible to newcomers?
- 2.5 CYP Should we think about introducing the "Messy Church" idea?
- 3.1 Public attitudes Are different forms of "Church" the way forward?

Teach, Baptise and Nurture

- 2.3 Worship Should we introduce Healing services?
- 2.4 CYP Should "Children and Communion" be considered?
- 2.6 Inclusion Is there more we could do?
- 2.7 Fellowship
 Groups Could they be given wider roles and coverage?
- 2.8 Pastoral Care Will it be possible to organise wider congregation involvement?

Other

- 2.9 Social Justice/
 Environment Could we do more?

Resourcing

- 3.4 Resource
 Pressures How will we respond to what is likely to be a need for increased physical and financial resources? How can we encourage greater participation, especially in leadership roles?

To reconcile the desirability of developing the "Mission" with availability of resources might need some attempt made at setting priorities so that the most important areas of activity are sustained. A valid question to ask in all of this is what does it mean to be an effective and engaged parish church today?