East Midland Baptist Association

**EMBA Mission Action Planning – An Introduction**

**What is Mission Action Planning?**

Mission Action Planning is a tried and tested process which aims to help churches grow in fruitfulness in God’s mission. Any church, irrespective of size, style or theological persuasion could benefit from engaging with a MAP process.

The potential benefits include:-

* Clarifying the unique identity and calling of your church
* Seeing your church and community more clearly
* Discerning what God is calling your church to become and to do
* Developing plans that move your church community towards God’s revealed future
* Discovering unity of purpose centred on God’s mission.

**The EMBA MAP Process - Overview**

Mission Action Planning can take various form, but the EMBA process follows 3 distinct phases. Each phase answers a question, as follows:-

1. Where are we now?

2. Where could we be?

3. Where will we be?

Phase one encourages a ruthless honesty about the health of a church and the extent of its current influence in its community. The *EMBA Fruitfulness Indicator self-assessment tool* provides a helpful way into this question.

Phase two invites an exploration of potential developments and options for the church. This is the phase for ideas generation in support of the church’s vision.

Phase three involves discerning God’s leading from amongst these options, and setting priorities, goals and plans.

Beyond phase three, churches will need to develop a way monitoring progress towards these priorities, goals, and plans. Such monitoring is an expression of accountability towards God (a commitment to following the leading God has given). Whilst it may be possible for a church leadership to hold itself accountable, a Mission Accompanier will be particularly useful in this regard (read on for more details).

It should be immediately apparent from this outline that the MAP process aims to generate movement from the current situation towards a more fruitful future. The process is likely to involve change, and because change can be costly, participating churches would be wise to prepare well before embarking on the process.

**Preparing to engage with MAP**

In addition to the organisational aspects of the MAP process, which we’ll touch on shortly, two dimensions of preparation are essential – prayer and inspiration.

PRAYER

The process starts with prayer – because all mission flows from God. It is through prayer that we seek the will of God, offer him our hopes and dreams and receive his vision and the strength for the way ahead. Prayer must start the MAP process and underpin each stage of it. Ideally, such prayer will be individual and collective, and will include a strong element of listening to God.

INSPIRATION

Alongside prayer, the MAP process requires the right kind of inspiration to guide it. Churches that embark on the MAP process for inadequate reasons – e.g. to “save the church from extinction” or simply to confirm what already exists are likely to be disappointed. Motivation matters!

Preparation for MAP should include some reflection on the nature of God and the consequent calling of the church. Stating it succinctly God is, by nature, a missionary God and any thinking and planning about mission should start with God’s character. Mission doesn’t start with the church, it starts with God and belongs to him. A much-quoted sentence from the Church of England’s Mission Shaped Church report captures this idea well; *“It’s not the Church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a church in the world.”* And to point to a greater authority, the Apostle Paul speaks eloquently of God reconciling the world to himself in Christ, and his own role as a minister of reconciliation as secondary. (2 Corinthians 5:11-21.) Whilst Paul’s focus in this text is the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation of individuals to God, the context makes clear that this is part of God’s total reconciling work in Christ; the bringing into being of “new creation”. All this is God’s work, and God calls his people to participate with him. This perspective is foundational when entering the MAP journey and churches would benefit from reflecting on this cosmic understanding of mission.

One way of doing this is via the “Five Marks of Mission”. These “marks” originated in the Anglican church of Canada but have been adopted by the whole Anglican community, and mission thinkers from many denominations, including Baptists.

The Five Marks are:

1. To proclaim the good news of the kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

So, God’s mission is BIG and the MAP process helps a local church discover it’s small part in God’s BIG mission.

**How to plan an EMBA MAP Process**

1. Prepare with prayer. Seek to engage the congregation in multiple ways in praying for the journey ahead and preparing their own hearts to be led by the Spirit.
2. Decide as a leadership team (and possibly at a Church Members meeting) that the MAP process is for you. If you are still uncertain about it having read all the material provided, please talk to your Regional Minister or to the Mission Accompanier Associate.
3. Decide whether to request a Mission Accompanier (MA). Whilst this isn’t essential it is strongly recommended. A MA will help you see clearly; provide objectivity, input and ideas; encourage and support you throughout the process; and hold you accountable. A MA will also be able to help you tailor the process to the circumstances of your church. Contact your Regional Minister if you’d like the help of a MA.
4. Consider how you will engage the church membership in the MAP process. The insights of members will be important at various points and as the output of the process will inevitably involve change, then their engagement will reap rewards. MAP needs to be led by the leaders but engage the whole church.
5. Use the Fruitfulness Indictors Self-assessment tool for phase 1 as directed in the guideline section of this document. It’s important to work on the Self-assessment tool as individuals before sharing insights to avoid ‘group think’. Your MA will be particularly useful as you bring your thinking together as a leadership team (and possibly as a church).
6. If your church has a mission statement and/or vision statement consider the extent to which the Fruitfulness Indicator output suggests that this is being fulfilled and whether these statements need to be updated. Time could be invested at this stage in renewing the vision if appropriate.
7. For phases 2 & 3 use the 'Developing a Mission Action Plan' document with its provided template to generate ideas and options projecting out into the next 5 years, set priorities, and make a plan for the next 12 months. The 12 month plan is particularly helpful in encouraging forward momentum.
8. Set a review date, ideally involving your Mission Accompanier. Specific developments and commitments appearing in the 12 month plan should be monitored by those taking responsibility, but the whole plan should be reviewed at least annually.

As the MAP process unfolds, it is possible that further research or learning needs will emerge. An annotated list of relevant and useful resources is provided as part of this MAP resource.

**Important note**

Whilst we encourage the use of the MAP process in its entirety for maximum benefit, we recognise that it is a demanding process. Churches that are unable to commit to the full process, however, can still benefit from the resource. Such churches might use the Fruitfulness Indicators self-assessment tool, for example, as a stock taking exercise. When this more selective approach is adopted, a church should still keep in mind the three phases of the process outlined on page one of this introduction.