

Visioning Day Toolkit for Growth or Mission Action Planning

Note written up by the staff of the (Resource) Strategy and Development Unit

1. Introduction

This is a tool-kit developed specifically for helping parishes prepare for and develop Growth or Mission Action Plans. It includes preparatory material as well as material for use on the day. It is largely based on a tool-kit developed by Peterborough diocese, with one or two additions.

2. Preparatory material

The preparatory activity is as important as the day itself: members of the congregation cannot be expected to work well from a standing start, and having an opportunity to discuss and pray about the concept of growth planning with the wider church community, before embarking on the exercise, is likely to repay the effort. A check-list of preparatory questions and action is attached at **Annex I**.

The questions are designed to ensure that the parish really is ready to:

- make the commitment to a Growth or Mission Action Plan;
- consider it prayerfully (and ideally hold a specific meeting to do this);
- ensure the congregation is involved; and
- make sure that the practical arrangements for the Vision Day itself are conducive to a successful outcome.

The check-list also suggests inviting a member of the diocesan parish development team to speak to the PCC, and for a member of the team to preach just before the Vision Day.

3. Who should attend the Vision Day?

The incumbent and any clergy associated with the parish, together with at least the members of the PCC. The parish should consider extending the invitation to the congregation more widely.

4. On the Day...

The room should be set up as described in the preparatory questions, with tables seating up to 9 people, and materials for undertaking the key exercises and reporting them back. Participants should be encouraged to attend for the whole day, with clear start and finishing times: this applies particularly to the incumbent, whose leadership and commitment to the process are vital.

Exercise one – how we see ourselves now

The first exercise looks at the church community as it currently stands, using the boat picture at **Annex 2A**.

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The boat represents their church(es). This should be enlarged to A0 size. Church members should be invited in pairs to write on post-it notes the following:

- a) on the blue sky, **the reasons why they come to church**;
- b) on the flat sea, **the things that have to happen but they don't necessarily enjoy** (like PCC meetings);
- c) on the rocks beneath the surface, **the things which threaten the boat** eg lack of money, low numbers of children attending, etc.

Someone from the Diocesan support team (or an independent facilitator) should then facilitate a discussion on the views that have been expressed.

Exercise two – what the future might look like

This exercise uses the 'AGM' diagram in **Annex 2B**, blown up to A1 size.

There are three steps in encouraging participants to think about the future and where God may be leading them. This involves them imagining what the church's AGM might look like in 5 years' time:

- a) write on the 'front cover' in the middle of the diagram a concise but engaging title, that summarises **what God is doing in the church**.
- b) insert on the 'page contents' diagram on the left of the picture, **a one line summary of the individual reports that will be on the AGM agenda in 5 years' time** (such as children's work, youth work, stewardship, outreach).
- c) in the voice bubbles on the right-hand side, participants should be asked to imagine **what people will be saying or thinking about the church if it is everything God is calling it to be**.

Someone from the diocesan support team (or an independent facilitator) should then facilitate a discussion which summarises common themes between the various tables of participants.

An alternative to the 'AGM' exercise is to imagine the parish's website in 5 years' time. In this case, you could:

- a) write in the top section the church's name and a 'strapline' which summarises **what God is doing in the church**.
- b) insert on the 'What's on' and 'Latest news' tabs, **a one line summary of the mission and ministry you hope the church will be undertaking** (such as children's work, youth work, stewardship, outreach).
- c) in the 'Guestbook' section in the lower centre, participants should be asked to imagine **what people will be saying or thinking about the church if it is everything God is calling it to be**.

Exercise three – taking forward actions

This exercise is based on the 'Target Tank' picture at **Annex 2C**, again at A1 size.

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Based on the common themes in the second exercise, this looks at who is going to do what to take forward the various strands of activity. The aim is to begin to build up an action plan to see the 5-year vision become a reality.

Specific, measurable and achievable goals are written in the 'Target'. The actions to achieve the target are written in the 'Tank', along with the name of the person responsible for doing it. Underneath, in the 'bumps' area, are written the various difficulties that might be encountered. The participants should be encouraged to think about how these might be overcome, as a form of risk assessment.

5. Next steps

The next step after the exercise is to invite the parish to take the overall vision and the actions identified during the exercise and to develop them into the Growth or Mission Action Plan.

Although this will depend on the model used by the individual diocese, it is likely to be along the lines of:

- A brief “vision statement” to encapsulate where the participants believe God is calling their church to be in 5 years time (a couple of paragraphs);
- 4 or 5 specific actions that will be done in the next *12 months* to see the vision start to become a reality;
- A review date and structure to examine how well the action points have been achieved at the end of the year.

We are grateful to the diocese of Peterborough for providing the material used in this note.

Growth / Action Plans Checklist

Before deciding on a GAP...

- Are you ready to grow?
- Are your churches willing to commit to a plan?
- Have you had chance to discuss it with your PCC?

Preparing to develop a plan?

- Invite a member of the GAP team to discuss GAPs with the PCC
- Pray about the possibilities for a GAP
- Book a vision day (preferably on a Saturday) with the GAPs team.
- Invite at least all the PCCs members and possibly all the church to attend the vision day
- Pick a suitable venue
- Invite your GAPs team vision day leader to come and preach a few Sundays prior to the vision day
- Write about it in parish publications
- Hold a prayer meeting for the vision day and GAP

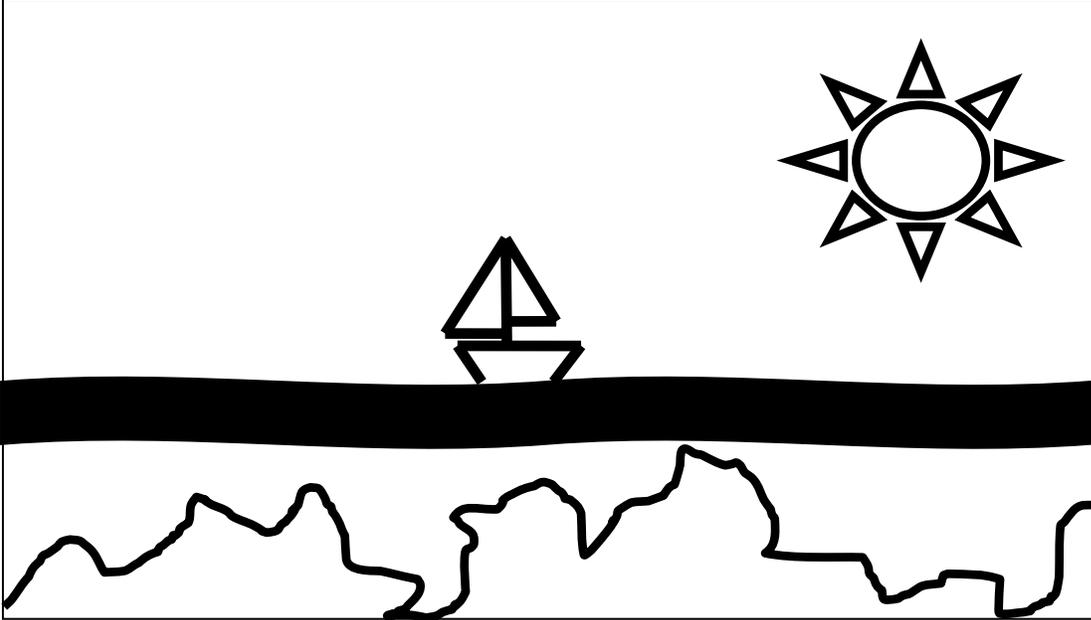
The Vision Day....

- Advertise the start and end time of the day. Encourage full attendance for the entire day.
- Arrange refreshments
- The venue must be able to seat all the expected participants around tables with no more than 9 people on each table.
- The incumbent should attend for the entire day.
- The expressed outcome is to move towards writing a Growth Action Plan.

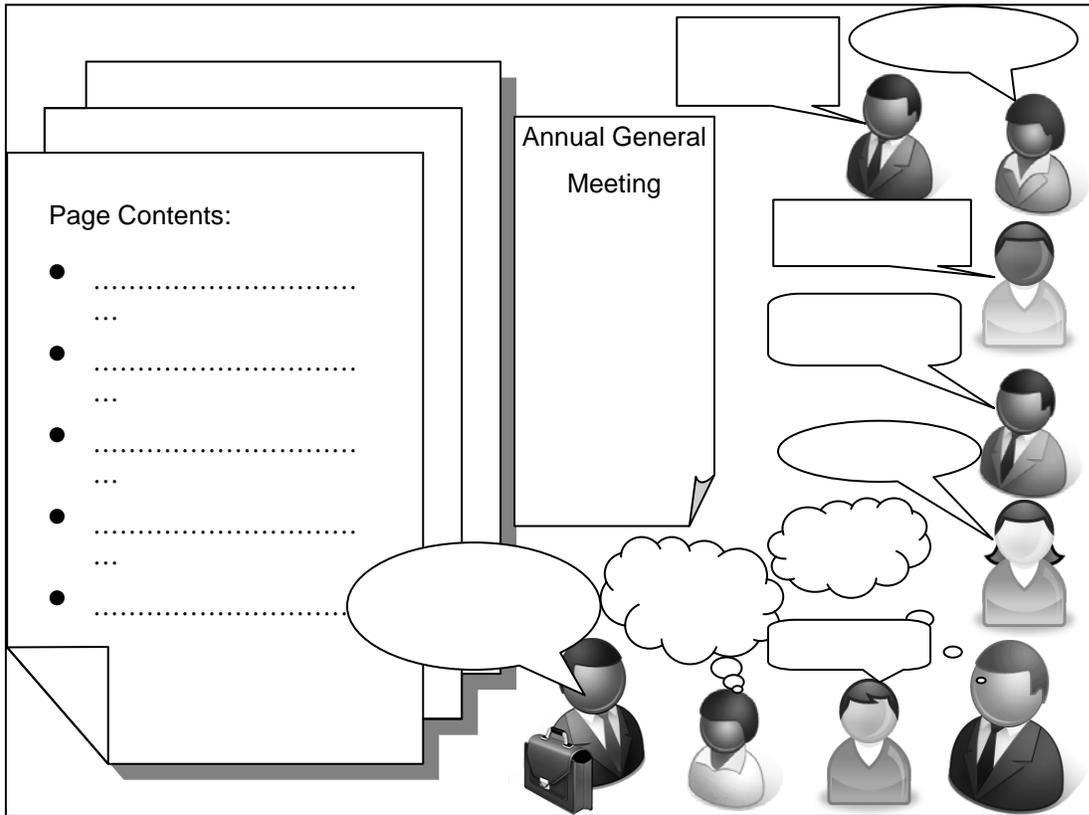
Writing the Plan...

- After the vision day, write a draft GAP to take to the next PCC for editing. When complete, ask for PCC support for the GAP.
- Include a review date, in one year's time.
- Include a named reviewer from outside the parish/benefice to come annually to measure the GAPs progress.

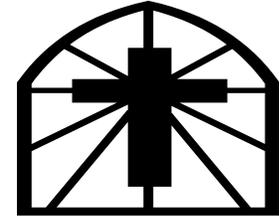
A The Boat picture (First exercise)



B The AGM chart (Second exercise)



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C The Target Tank (Third Exercise)

