

STEP 1

Who are we?

As a church, within our community



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In listening to God, our community, and our church, we are seeking to answer the following questions:

- Why does our church exist?
- What have been the highs and lows over time in the life of our parish?
- What events have shaped our local community, the whole parish?
- Are there any 'hidden' areas or issues which may need to be named?
- What does our church do:
 - In service of the Church
 - In service of our community
 - In service of God?
- What are our parish resources (financial, buildings, people, goodwill...)?
- What networks does our parish have?
- What are other similar parishes doing which have been successful?
- What are neighbouring parishes doing which can be complemented or replicated?
- What are our (perceived) barriers to mission?

Theory

This is the step most often missed out by churches when planning for mission, however is the most crucial.

It is easy to make assumptions about the church and about the community which if wrong will lead you into missional activities which will not lead to growth.

The more information you have, the more successful any resulting plans will be.

Theology

Nehemiah 2:12-17

Luke 2:46 (Jesus listening in temple)

Number 13 (Moses and the spies)

Proverbs 2:11 (Importance of planning and understanding)

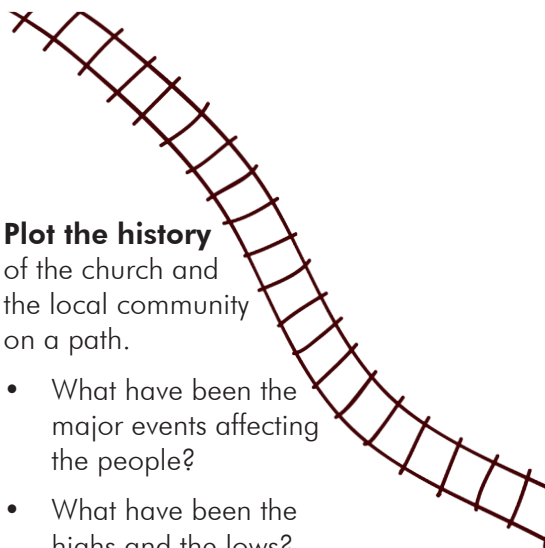
Mark 10:46-47,51-52 (Jesus asks blind man what he wants, not making assumptions)

Practice

There are many tools and ideas for how you can complete this step. Below are some examples:

Take a 'drone view' of the church and its local community

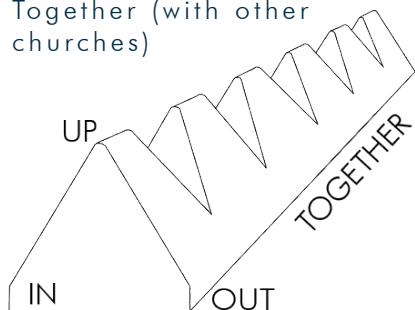
- What are the barriers to people being part of church?
- What are the ways that people have come to church? For example, invitation, special event, because they wanted baptism...
- What are the fires that need to be dealt with?



'Toblerone' matrix:

List all the things you do as a church:

- Up (to worship God)
- In (to serve the Church)
- Out (to reach out to others)
- Together (with other churches)



Other ideas:

- SWOT analysis: Plot your strengths and weaknesses as well the opportunities and threats on simple grid.
- List Resources (personnel, financial, buildings and grounds, relational, networks, reputation...)
- Time usage sheets - how is ministry time spent? Is it being used efficiently? Is the person good at writing letters writing the letters, and the person good at publicity creating publicity?
- Use data collected internally, such as Statistics for Mission, the Electoral Roll, the accounts, any surveys which have been carried out. (See resources back page)

Communication

This is a great opportunity to get the whole church and local community involved, as you explore who you are, and a greater chance of everyone owning the Called to Grow Plan. Here are some ideas you might like to try:

1 Introduce Called Together in a format which the church members can access.

3 Hold a prayer vigil, 'boiler room' or 24/7 prayer for a weekend or week. Why not choose a significant time in the Church year, such as Pentecost or your patronal festival?

4 Put up a large 'blob church' diagram in the church. Invite people to sticker, or colour a part of, the 'blob person' they most identify with.

6 Get involved in local Facebook groups and community apps. A great way to connect with your community in an informal way.

8 Hold Bible studies, parish weekends, or give sermons with a focus on bringing the church community together to discuss who they are as Church.

2 Prayer Stations: These can ask people to engage with questions about where there is life in the Church, where there is darkness, where they are, what they are excited or hopeful about. Allow for both open and confidential feedback through, for example, a prayer wall and prayer box.

5 Meet with your community, the businesses, schools, groups and organisations, residents and civic offices, as well as the local churches. Let them know what you are doing.

7 Send a questionnaire out to local people, asking how they view the church, what they need from you, and what they may wish to contribute. Be prepared for responses you don't like, but you do respond to them as it is you who asked the questions.

Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people and kindle in us the fire of your love.

All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God and fellow-heirs with Christ.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people.

Renew the face of your creation, Lord, pouring on us the gifts of your Spirit, and kindle in us the fire of your love.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people and kindle in us the fire of your love.

cf Romans 8

Resources

- Chapter 12 of Reclaimed Church: How churches grow, decline and experience revitalisation by Bill Henard

- Listening for Mission: mission audit for fresh expressions

- Review section of Mission Action Planning

- Chapter 8, The Theory and Practice of Change Management by John Hayes