Equipping for Mission
This booklet contains our ‘top tips’, checklists and advice on where to go to resource you and your church as you participate in God’s mission. The first section covers training and events that we run and the second section is a ‘catch all’ checklist for running good events yourselves, with a particular emphasis on publicity and communications. There is also a handy (but not exhaustive!) bibliography at the back.

All events we run will be advertised through the ‘Broadcast’ newsletter that comes from the Mission Department; if you’d like to sign up to it please contact: cchisnall@stalbans.anglican.org

We also send out emails with details of training events etc. But if there’s something that you think would be good to cover and isn’t on our list, do get in touch; we’d be delighted to hear from you.

**TRAINING & EVENTS:**

Throughout the year the Flourishing Churches Team plan and run several training events to support our parishes and equip our leaders for God’s mission in today’s world. These seek to cover the basics of what we do, namely, Mission Action Planning Workshops and Follow-Ups and Growing Generous Giving Workshops. And we work on themes and projects as well with ‘one off’ events focussing on specific Church Growth matters, for example we are researching Spiritual Growth with particular emphasis on the sacraments at present.

**Mission Action Planning Workshops & Follow-Ups:**

We run two MAP workshops each year (usually in January & September) plus the follow-up event in June for the January cohort, and March for the September cohort.

These are usually 1/2 days and they move around the diocese geographically.

Each event covers aspects of the MAP process and asks parishes; ‘where are you on the journey?’, ‘where do you want to get to?’ and ‘how are you going to achieve it?’ This sounds simple! But we spend time looking at the process and the rationale and theology behind each step on the journey, and support parishes in being bold and courageous in their work.

The Follow-Up sessions support parishes in keeping momentum and motivation, and allow for some more in-depth planning and reflection. The FC team can also help network parishes with others that have done similar things so wisdom can be shared and insights gained.

The MAP workshops are to be seen as two halves of the same thing, so it is useful to come to both and essential to come to them in the correct order! We encourage parishes to bring teams, sometimes whole PCCs or MAP teams, so the wisdom isn’t just sitting with one person. We give time for learning together and sharing ideas as well as input from the front.

**Growing Generous Giving Workshops:**

These workshops are also run twice a year in various locations around the diocese and are open to clergy, wardens, treasurers, gift aid officers, stewardship teams – anyone and everyone who has anything to do with money and encouraging joyful giving as part of Christian mature discipleship. We cover: the theology of giving and money, the importance of vision, giving campaigns (some dos, don’ts and top tips) and a raft of practical advice on stewardship, including the Parish Giving Scheme, card reader machines and digital giving. We seek also to inspire generosity and put the giving of money in the context of all our giving; including our time, our skills and talents, and our joyful commitment to God and His church.

**Leading your Church into Growth ~ LyCiG**

Our flagship annual LyCiG conference focuses on church growth in terms of numbers, spiritual depth and in service of our communities. We run it every 18 months over 3 to 4 days (residentially) and strongly encourage teams from parishes to attend. The Mission Department heavily subsidise the cost; such is our belief that this course is essential for anyone interesting in growing the church for the glory of God!

Leading your Church into Growth courses take the form of an open seminar with interactive talks, practical exercises, workshops and time and space for personal reflection. Times for informal conversation provides opportunities for our team members to answer questions and to explore the profile of individual churches. Bringing a team from your parish means that together you discern and capture a vision and can bring the learning back to your church. Every church that attends is equipped to lead a LyCiG local course which takes the whole church community through the material, grows ownership of mission and outreach, and catalyses initiative and creativity, as well as passion and commitment.

Leading your Church into Growth’s residential course is aimed at clergy and lay leaders from across different traditions who are looking for help and encouragement in leading and growing their churches.

This is a course where the local church:

- Learns key biblical teachings on growth
- Discusses/asks questions and applies these teachings to their own situation
Becomes inspired and motivated
Makes decisions, implements plans and new ways of working
Sticks with these plans, reviewing and adapting them as they go along

We offer a range of workshops during the conference through which members of the team bring their personal experience and expertise of encouraging church growth in different contexts, churchmanship and settings. Some examples would be: Catholic evangelism, Multi parish benefices, rural and small churches, evangelism to specific people groups and Fresh Expressions.

Sessions in the course include...

- Going for growth: Context, leadership & vision
- Our focus: Committing ourselves to growth
- Our plan: Developing a strategy for growth and doing it
- Our culture: Developing a community of invitation, welcome & hospitality
- Creating a plan for growth: Important tools and resources
- Our calling: Telling our story and helping people meet Jesus
- Our journey: Being disciples, making disciples, following Jesus
- Our heart: Developing worship that helps the church to grow
- Next steps: The journey onward

Please speak to a Church Growth Officer for more information and for details on how to book.

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RUNNING YOUR OWN EVENTS – A QUICK CHECKLIST ON PUBLICITY AND WELCOME

There is precious little point in working hard on an event only to have no-one show up! Or worse, show-up, feel unwelcome and leave! Here’s a few things to bear in mind when running an event or series of events:

- Publicity: Recent research showed that people need to hear or see a message 7 times across 4 different media to really clock it. This means, articles in parish magazines, pewsheets, banners outside your church (about £50 each and worth every penny), websites, facebook, Instagram, fliers, and that golden piece of advertising that money can’t buy – word of mouth. This isn’t a pick and mix list, do as many as you can!
- ALL NOTICES SHOULD BE UP TO DATE! And up to date on the website too. This cannot be over emphasised! If you’re out of date you appear present but absent.
- Websites: Are essential – most newcomers will check out your website before they turn up. Does your website accurately reflect what they’ll find in person?

Here’s some top-tips - a good website is:

- Clear
- Uncluttered
- Only uses one or two fonts
- Carries only up to date photos – especially of people (smiling people are particularly good!) NOT empty churches! (permission is needed for children’s images to be used)
- It should mirror your other communications – same font, colour ways, same style, same names and titles for things - be consistent. If your Vicar is sometimes called vicar, rector, priest, pastor or minister... it adds unnecessary levels of confusion. These names are largely unrecognised by the unchurched, pick one and stick to it and if necessary explain it)

- Talking of the language that we use... research has shown that the average reading age in the UK is 10 years old, we suggest you pitch your script accordingly.
- Is your website easily viewable on the laptop AND a mobile?
- Be concise so it doesn’t need endless scrolling - the young don’t scroll...

It is essential for your website to:

- Contain your safeguarding policies with links to the Diocesan page (including a friendly cover note saying how important it is to care properly for all of God’s children) and contact details for your parish safeguarding officer.
- Give ways to get in touch with the right people - with pictures
- Say who you are and what you do AND when you do it
- Have pages for all occasional offices, with links to the national pages
- Say something about the faith! Should be obvious, but isn’t!
- Have links on ‘A church near you’ website
Some top tips on having a Church Facebook Page:

- Make sure it is a page not a profile
- Timeline MUST look busy and up to date
- Make it an open page – do not have an ‘ask to join’ policy - this can make it look cliquey
- Put the Church logo – on the profile (Canva.com can help here)
- Cover picture – a packed church or promotion of an event is best
- It is good practice to get permission for all vulnerable adults and essential for children, before their pictures can be used
- Add your website and address and other social platforms
- Create and average of 5 posts per week. Be consistent! Every week! Don't have gaps
- Schedule posts – FB can do this for you! Do it once a week to spread them out (it's a weekly time commitment of 20 minutes – well worth it) Best times to pick are: 8am, 12pm, 4pm, 8pm – check your analytics and you can see spikes; for example 8pm is often best as people log on after work...
- Use IMAGES – they are 4 times more likely to be shared
- Use other people's shares too, e.g. C of E or the Archbishop of Canterbury - BUT you can't schedule these posts
- It is suggested that we use 20% broadcast and 80% conversational – it encourages the social in social media.
- Pin the most important post to the top of your page: click on 3 dots at top of post, pin to page – eg your Christmas Services with image BUT you must remember to un-pin it when the event has happened
- Boosting a post – this costs money. Boost posts where you’re offering something e.g. holiday club. Must have photo or video. Not too much writing on it. You choose age profile and geography. You select your target audience based on algorithms. £1 per day minimum. More money = more advertising. Can take up to 24hours to go live. Each post is manually checked. One church reported 400 extra people at their carol service for £6 post!

For more tips visit -

Books on Growth & Mission:

- What makes Churches Grow – Bob Jackson
- Everybody Welcome – Bob Jackson
- Going for Growth – Bob Jackson (a great short book that PCCs can read together)
- Mission Action Planning – Mike Chew & Mark Ireland
- The Healthy Churches Handbook – Robert Warren
- Creating Missional Worship – Tim Lomax
- A Generous Community – C. Andrew Doyle

Some top tips on welcome:

- Look ready and prepared for newcomers – new people coming to church should be normal!
- Print cards to put in pews (with pens) to collect contact details (GDPR compliant www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/data-protection) and add them to mailing lists – also ask if they’d like a visit or have a prayer request
- Have a weekly newsletter via mailchimp www.mailchimp.com - for what’s on, future plans, thank yous for previous events etc. Wednesday is a good day to advertise Sunday
- Encourage church members to bring their friends – if they aren't, ask why not?
- Train stewards on the door – it's a vocational ministry and not for everyone
- Preach and teach on the 'sacrifice of welcome'. By this we mean that all are ambassadors for Christ all the time. In welcoming the newcomer we may occasionally miss out on our friendly catch-ups with our friends. This can be a sacrificial ministry, and it is one to which we are all called
- Create space in church for wheelchairs and buggies
- If you need to keep your door closed for heat preservation maybe consider a note to this effect: 'This door is closed to keep the warmth in and not you out! Please Push; you are welcome here!
- Have an area for children – toys, small tables, activities etc
- Sign post the loo (if you have one!) If you don't make sure that at big events you find a local one that can be used – pub, village hall...
- Find a non-church friend who can proof read your communications for too much 'in house' jargon
- Smile
- Run the 'Everyone Welcome' course by Bob Jackson

This link also contains useful information on the boundaries between private and public aspects of using social media, confidentiality and the legal framework.