

A Mapping Exercise



Reconnecting your Parish
with its Context



We are the Episcopal Church
in the Diocese of

El Camino Real



Disciples on mission in many cultures

Welcome
Bienvenidos
Chao
Salaam



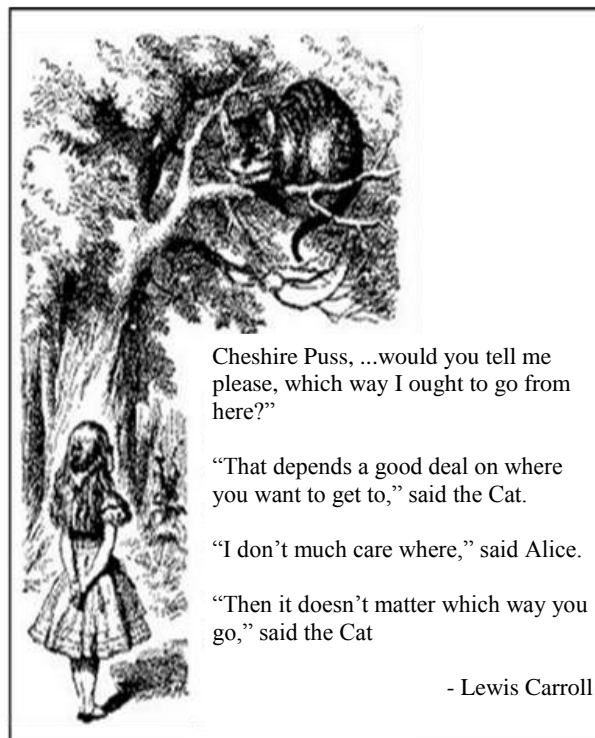
Tuloy po kayo
Hau koda
Huan Ying
Shalom

INTRODUCTION

Dwight D. Eisenhower, the 34th President of the United States, once said, “Plans are worthless, but planning is everything.” I do strongly agree with his statement. Plans are the final product of a process, but the real power is in the energy and vision produced during the planning time. As President Eisenhower explains later in his remarks at the National Defense Executive Reserve Conference, “... if you haven’t been planning you can’t start to work, intelligently at least.” In his own words, the President considers that the purpose of planning is to keep the mind of people in “the character of the problem.”

I’ve always considered that congregational development is not about the formula lent to us to solve our internal challenges, or the reshuffling of resources to become more efficient and/or effective, or much less about the reaffirmation of a glorious past that makes us feel good and still relevant. The development of our congregation is about creative imagination, reconnecting with that that brings passion, and the pursue of intentionality in the way we live our faith.

Here there is picture from the story of “Alice in Wonderland” that may illustrate the crossroads in which some congregations may be as they are trying to discern identity, purpose and coherent action.



The Mapping Exercise is a compilation of instruments designed to assist a congregation work on issues related to congregational identity, vocation and mission. The methodology behind this exercise is very simple:

- Identify the context in which you do ministry
- Discern your own context
- Plan and act with a new missional spirit

Unlike the excerpt from Alice in Wonderland here presented, for us it does matter the direction we are taking.

Enjoy the journey and remember that God promised us a “new land.” We are in transition.

The Rev. C. Jesús Reyes,
Canon for Congregational Growth & Development

RECONNECTING THE PARISH WITH ITS CONTEXT

OBJECTIVE:

This mapping exercise offers congregations the opportunity to discern anew their own understanding of being a Christian community and refresh their own sense of vocation.

The process involves the following key concepts:

- **Congregational Identity:** Assist the congregations in identifying with appreciation their own strengths, challenges and opportunities for mission in their own context
- **Discerning God's call:** Help the congregation move from an "inner-looking mindset" into an "outer-looking approach," and help congregations create a check and balance system so that these two mindsets coexist in harmony
- **Becoming a "missional" church:** The process is not just about "changing" the way congregations operate, but it rather involves "transforming" their own sense of being

STEPS AND PROCEDURES FOR THE MAPPING EXERCISE

TIME FRAME:

1. **Step one:** “Visioning Team” formation - The Visioning Team is the group of church leaders assigned to engage the work of creating, revising or re-imagining the congregation’s sense of vocation. The Visioning Team can be formed by the Church Vestry, a purposely constituted Task Force established by the Church Vestry, or a combination of elected and selected members of the congregation.
2. **Step two:** First Visioning Team retreat - This retreat could take a minimum of 3 hours and no more than 6 hours. The retreat can occur in one day or be divided into two 3 hours sessions. One of the sessions is used to watch and debrief the video: “Reinventing Leadership: Change in an Age of Anxiety” by Edwin Friedman (*It is highly recommended!!!*) However, churches may opt out of engaging this material. The second 3 hours presentation involves a step-by-step explanation of the Mapping Exercise. The Visioning team will be divided into four Task Groups. The Task Groups will be in charge of developing one of the four components of the Mapping Exercise –Congregational Mapping, Faith Development Mapping, Mind Mapping and Community Assets Mapping-.
3. **Step three:** The Task Groups meet accordingly to complete their assignments. This could take from two weeks to one month, depending on the previously agreed time table established by the Visioning Team.
4. **Step four:** Second “Visioning Team” retreat/meeting –a 4 to 5 hour meeting–. The purpose of this retreat/meeting is to share the results of the Task Groups mapping exercises. This is the initial step to start putting the “puzzle” together. This retreat will also formulate the approach for the next step – “The Community Feedback” phase. This second retreat/meeting should help the Visioning Team identify the issues/questions that need further input from the congregation and the community at large. The congregation will help the Visioning Team understand better the congregation’s identity, and the consultation of the community at large will help the Visioning Team understand how their church is perceived.
5. **Step five:** The “Community Feedback” phase - This can be done through focus groups, one-on-one meetings, survey(s) internal among selected members of the congregation (sample approach), neighborhood canvassing, or any combination of these community input alternatives. The community at large survey is not encouraged as it can be quite costly and burdensome. This phase should be accomplished in two weeks.
6. **Step six:** Third “Visioning Team” retreat –a 4 to 5 hours meeting-. The purpose of this meeting is to use the “Community Feedback” as the eyeglasses to review or develop a completely new

Strategic Vision for the congregation. This stage of the process may require more than one meeting, but it should not take more than three meetings.

7. **Step seven:** Parish Town Hall meeting – The purpose of this church gathering is to energize the whole congregation with a new vision. This is the community buy in time. It is a time for community conversation. It has to be well planned, especially when big changes in the life of the congregation may be involved.
8. **Step eight:** Fourth -and most likely last- “Visioning Team” meeting. This can be a 2 to 3 hour meeting to reflect on the parish’s Town Hall meeting, incorporate changes to the new Strategic Vision and finalize the proposal.
9. **Step nine:** Congratulations, you are done!!! This is the final step and should be a moment for celebration adopting the new Strategic Vision. Now, the implementation and evaluation stages begin.