

Mission Action Plan St Barnabas 2017

Opening remarks

Thank you for being here today. For many generations now St Barnabas has had a distinctive profile in this city and shown remarkable capacity for responding to the times. You have experienced the very different kinds of ministry offered by your vicars over the Bob Lowe... Crawford Murray... John Day.... and your current vicar Mark Chamberlain. Just saying their names out loud reminds us how much the world and the church have changed over the years, which is why we are here today to work on a Mission Action Plan.

Thank you to all those people who responded to the survey Marcus created. Your responses will continue to provide helpful insights as the church plots a course into the future. There are lots of questions for Christians to grapple with. These days, there are many New Zealanders who do not know that Jesus Christ is a person, and haven't a clue what goes on in churches on Sunday. Christianity is no longer the default religion in New Zealand.

In the last census less than half the population expressed any kind of Christian affiliation and 42% said they had no religious affiliation at all. Even those of us who go to a worship service fairly regularly might struggle to explain what we believe and why. Churches just cannot cruise along on autopilot and expect to thrive. Local churches have to work harder, and creatively, to meaningfully engage with people in their neighbourhoods.

David Voas, lead researcher for the Church of England concluded after an enormous project in England:

*There is no single recipe for growth; there are no simple solutions for decline. The road to growth depends on the context, and what works in one place may not work in another. What seems crucial is that congregations are **constantly engaged in reflection**; churches **cannot soar on autopilot. Growth is a product of good leadership (lay and ordained) working with a willing set of churchgoers in a favourable environment.**¹*

So as we come together today to plan for the future of St Barnabas in Fendalton, let's be clear that we are here to set a strategic direction that will inspire this church - the people of St Barnabas - to live out the gospel together, and to be a vibrant witness to Christ in the world. To do that we need to be clear about the unique identity of St Barnabas: what this parish is and what it isn't; what it stands for, and to decide which areas in the life of *this church*, at *this time*, need extra attention and resourcing.

There are some things that *all* churches do:
churches run worship services
churches provide pastoral care
churches nurture the growth of disciples
there is a level of administration that is essential
the finances need stewardship.

¹ *From Anecdote to Evidence: Findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013.*
www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk page 7.

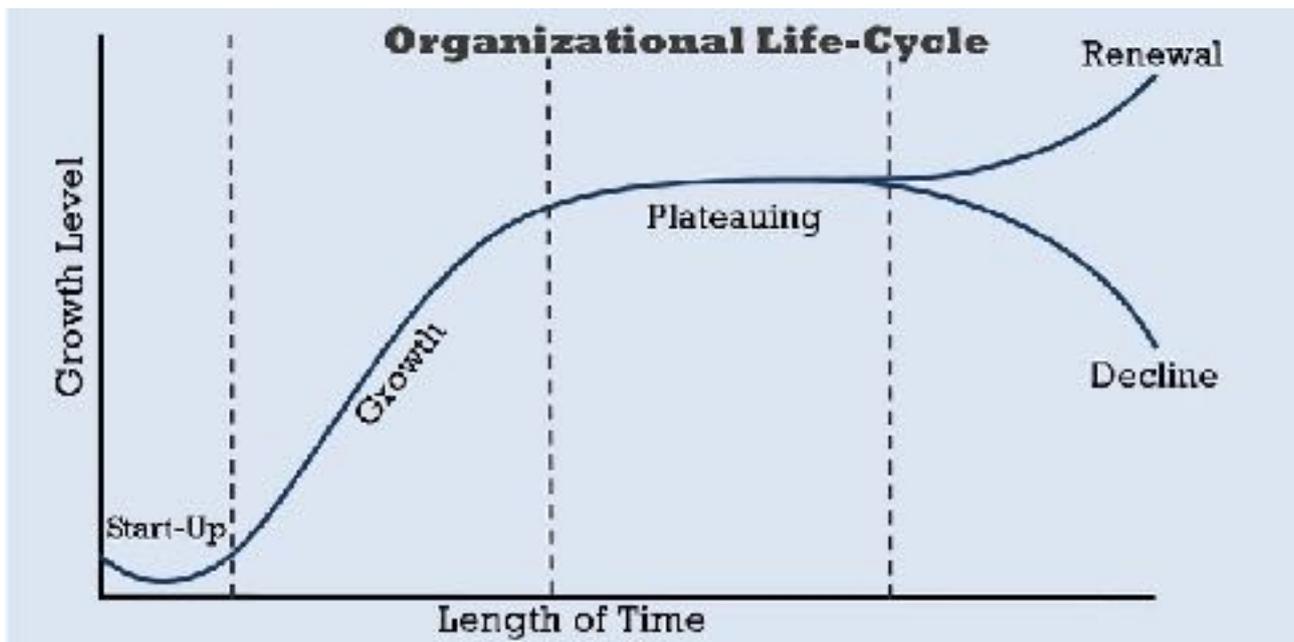
These are our core business, so we need to make sure we do them well. But there are some things that only this church, St Barnabas, can do. These opportunities arise from a combination of factors: the location of this parish, the people who are already here - their concerns and their capacities, the history that has shaped the church community, the relationships between the church and other organisations, and the resources available. The distinctive God-given mission of St Barnabas will stem from your unique identity. Rather than attempting to be all things to all people you gotta be who you are.

In setting priorities we are *not* saying that the other ministries that happen through St Barnabas are unimportant, but the whole point of what we are about to do is to focus on *what in particular* we believe God is calling the people of St Barnabas towards *today*.

To help with our work today
I want to begin by giving you three images
that will be helpful in our conversations:

- the curve
- a pin
- and the golden circle.

Image #1: The Curve



The first image is the curve. This curve will be very familiar to some of you. It describes the developmental stages of any organisation and it can be usefully applied to a whole church which is an organisation, and also to smaller groups within the church like a specific ministry area or a home group.

Different experts argue about how many phases there are, but this curve has four phases. Start-up. Growth. Plateaux. Decline or Renewal. And each phase presents different management and leadership challenges.

So in the start-up phase there will be lots of energy but also some uncertainty about how things are going to turn out. Morale is high. People are figuring out how to make things happen. There is a sense of purpose and hope. All going well this leads to growth. And when that happens the group needs to work out how they will organise themselves, who takes responsibility for what, and to figure out how to respond to new arrivals, new ideas, and new problems. Here the challenge is to stay healthy: to do conflicts well, to keep the mission - the groups reason for being - at the centre, and to adapt to the ongoing changes associated with growth.

When an organisation is in its prime it is likely to plateau. Ironically this is when people probably feel the most positive and the most comfortable. People in the group just keep doing the same thing, they settle in. And that might work for a while, but soon the evidence of mounting ineffectiveness will begin to stack up. Attendance drops, it gets harder and harder to fill particular roles, and perhaps are few faithful individual find themselves doing more and more to keep things going. This is exactly the time that the group need to be thinking about either wrapping things up well, or gearing up for a new phase. Some groups and activities are for a specific time, and there is nothing wrong with doing something for a season. But to keep a long term ministry healthy and growing the renewal will come through making changes.

This wont be easy. Some people in the group will carry on in a state of denial still basking in the afterglow of the growth phase, not quite believing things are starting to stagnate. So they resist any suggestion that things need to change. But even those who are willing to face the need for ongoing development will not always respond in helpful ways. Some instinctively turn into control freaks or worse - micro-managers who effectively suppress any creativity or initiative, which are the very things the group needs if it is going to thrive. And if you overhear someone say: "this is the way we do things around here" then you can be fairly sure that people have set themselves up as the guardians of the institution and have lost touch with their mission, and the reason *why* they do what they do.

Without some effort to recapture the original dream or to develop a new one during the plateau phase the group slides into decline and eventually fizzles out. Even if a visionary leaders with a lot of energy were to come along it is might be just too late.

What keeps a group growing through the plateau phase and into renewal are very grown-up behaviours like:

- taking time to review and recommit to the mission
- evaluating the traditions that have formed
- putting people in roles that match their competence
- investing in up-to-date training for leaders
- addressing dysfunctional relationships (bullies/gate keepers/workaholics/control freaks)
- cultivating a shared vision
- celebrating
- taking calculated risks
- doing things differently

So when we consider the Mission Action Plan keep in mind the curve, and think about the ministries that have reached that plateau and are in need of some kind of renewal or re-energisation. What needs to be wound down? What would you like to start-up?

Image #2 The Pin



The second image is The Pin.

Way way way back in the 18th century Adam Smith, who was a philosopher, economist... had some thoughts about efficiency. And in his writings he gave the example of a pin factory.

To make a pin took twelve distinct steps. And if one person were to make a pin, taking it through all twelve steps well that wouldn't be very efficient. Production would be very low. But if you were to get one person to do step one, and another person to do step two, and third to do step three, and so on and so on through all twelve steps production could increase tremendously! And indeed, this is exactly the kind of thinking that led to the industrial revolution.

But here is the thing, if you are involved in all twelve steps chances are you *feel connected* to the pin in ways that you would not if you were just number five on the production line. So while there are many things about the industrial revolution to be celebrated, these days we understand so ways of working are **very hard on people**. If we focus entirely on production and efficiency then workers become disconnected from the sorts of things that give us all a sense of meaning and fulfilment in our work, and keep us going. Things like the satisfaction of completing something, of having a sense of ownership, and a sense of vocation, the opportunity to do what we do well - to employ our gifts and skills, knowing that we are valued and appreciated.

I want to suggest to you that effective mission and ministry in the church is not a matter of production; it is not about doing more... and more... and more... activity. Effective mission is not about creating more and more programmes. Remember we are aiming for fruit not just leaves! So we need to be focused rather than frenetic.

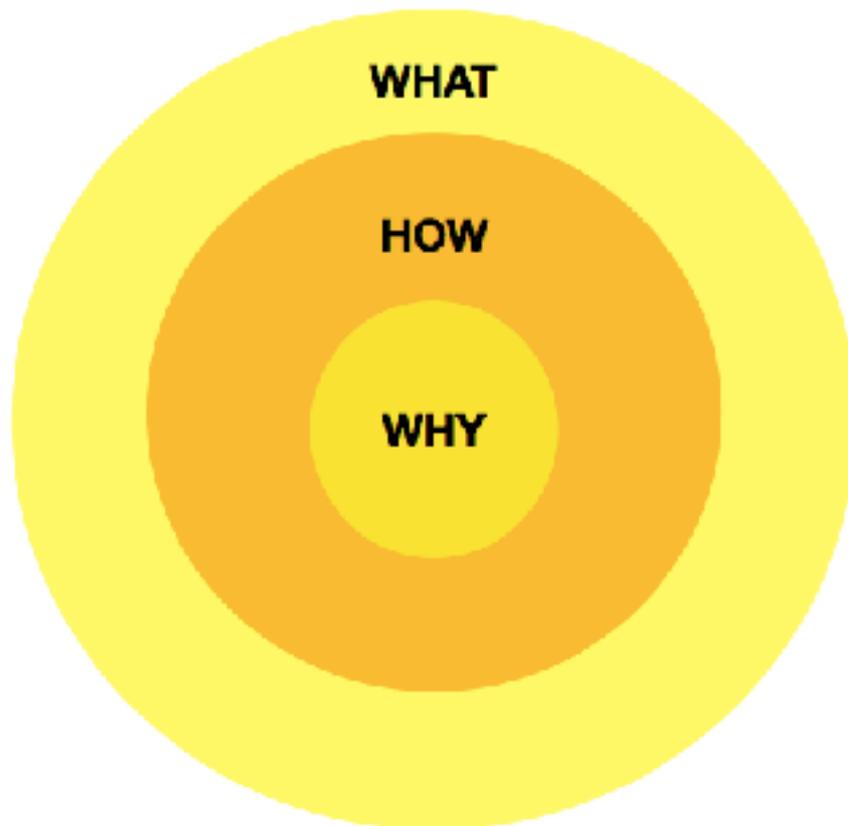
There will always be more we could be doing but God is not a relentless task master

pushing people until they crack up or burnout. We are called to life in God that brings human flourishing for *all*. Frazzled, overburdened, grumpy, Christians are not a good witness to the gospel of grace. Throughout the Scriptures God's people are called to live to a sustainable rhythm of work and rest and worship. Rest and worship are part of our witness. Stopping and wasting time with God helps reminds us that God is God and we are not. Pushing pause makes room, opens space, for the unpredictable work of the Spirit.

You have no doubt experienced that many good things take seemingly *unproductive* time. You can't hurry an epiphany, or rush through a process of forgiveness. There are fallow seasons in agriculture and in life when it looks like nothing is happening but things are composting down creating rich substrate in which new life takes form.

So as we think about the MAP remember that we are not churning out pins we are growing disciples. We need to be focused rather than frenetic.

Image #3 The Golden Circle



The third image is Simon Sinek's Golden Circle. And as you can see the golden circle is actually three circles and they help us understand how people get inspired to opt into something.

It turns out that organisations are always clear on what they do, and that comes across

in the way they present themselves to the world. So for example, St Barnabas is a church that provides a range of worship services in the Anglican tradition, as well as weekday programmes for people across the life span. That's what you do.

And then, most organisations know *how* they do what they do. So those leading the different ministries here at St Barnabas can probably explain how *their ministry* addresses the needs of those involved and how it improves their lives. They can likely list off some of the joys and benefits of the work they do.

But very few people or organisations know *why* they do what they do.

And by "why" I don't mean: "We do this is to share the gospel and make disciples in keeping with the great commission." That's a result. The "why," requires us to get in touch with our **purpose**. What's your purpose? What's your reason? What's your belief? Why do you do what you do? Why should anyone care? The "why" is going to have some "feeling words" - some heart - in it.

Looking at the golden circle, usually when we talk about life in the church we communicate from the outside in. We go from the clearest thing to the fuzziest thing. We talk about groups and services, and we invite people to come along and join in to the activities. But inspirational leaders and inspiring organisations - regardless of their size, communicate from the inside out.

Let me give you an example: Diana Butler Bass was asked by an older woman in her church to join the altar guild. This woman said to her "You like to arrange flowers don't you? I think you should join the guild!"

She was a nice person, who had offered faithful service to the church. Almost every week, she showed up early on Sunday morning to set up the altar. She ironed the altar cloth, shined the silver chalices, and laid everything out. It sounded like holy housework to Diana, but instead of saying yes or no Diana asked her "Why?" And the answer came back: "Because I've been doing this for 35 years," she said impatiently, "and I'm really tired. It's time for someone else to do it instead." Not exactly an appealing invitation. Understandably Diana turned the offer down. But then she reflected on what might have happened if the guild woman had invited her to join in, in a different way. What if she had said: "You know Diana, I've been serving on the altar guild for thirty-five years. Every Sunday, I wake before dawn and come down here to the church. It is so quiet. I come in to the building and unlock the sacristy. I open the drawer and take out the altar cloths and laces, an always marvel at how beautifully they are embroidered with all the colours of the seasons. I unfold them, iron them, and drape them on the altar. I make sure all the silver is clean and polished. I pour water and wine. While I set the table for the Lord's Supper, I've often wondered what it would have been like to set the table for Jesus and his friends. I've meditated on what it must have been like to be there with him. I've considered what it will be like when we eat with him in heaven. And I've learned a thing or two about service and beauty and community. You know, I'd like to share that with you. I'd like you to learn that too."

See the difference?

In the first case, Diana was asked take on an obligation, one that had worn the other woman down and become rote. In the second, she would have been inviting her into an experience, and a powerful one at that. And that was inspiring. That would have got a yes.

When we know **why** we engage in a particular activity, we experience deeper spiritual connections to what we do, and then we have something *golden* to offer to others.

“*Why*,” inspires. “*Why*,” speaks to heart and soul, and creates the possibility for other to get on board.

So *why* do you do what you do? Why does a particular ministry area matter? It is the *why* that will distinguish St Barnabas from other churches, or any other faith based group for that matter. *Why* should people come here and be a part of what happens here? Can you answer that? Because in this day and age people are not motivated by doing their duty, or propping up an institution, but people will opt in to an inspiring vision.

So as we shape the MAP keep asking *why*. Work from the inside out of the golden circle so that we are able to share an inspiring vision.