

# my MAP

Ministry Action Plan



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# MAP your Ministry

## Why this resource?

Often (and please note, not always!) Children’s Ministry (CM) leaders struggle alone, with little or no support from church leadership. “Sunday School” is seen as a necessary “child minding service”, while adults are doing church. CM leaders/workers simply get by from week to week, or month to month, or term to term. Very seldom is there a plan for a year ahead, let alone anything more. Often these leaders (mostly volunteers, sometimes paid) are trying to fit the planning and running of “Sunday School” into their hectic personal lives, juggling family, a paid job and everything else that goes with it. And in the meantime, our congregations are aging and our children and young people are walking away from church. We cannot afford to continue with this pattern. But we can’t expect a different outcome, if we continue doing what we have always done. Do we understand why we do what we do? Or is what we do simply based on what we have always done? What thoughts and processes and discussions had gone before, to understand WHAT and WHY, in order to decide HOW?

This resource has been written and developed with the aim of starting a few critical conversations in our churches. Conversations that will help us to think about what we are currently doing, and why. Conversations that will hopefully lead us to think about what we could and should be doing, if we believed certain basics: do we believe children and young people matter to God? Do we believe children are fellow pilgrims on a faith journey and that they play a part in God’s “Big Story”? Do we believe children have value to add, serving to do, love to give, wisdom and insight to share, influence to exercise? If so, how are we reflecting these beliefs as a church, a faith community, a leadership team?

## A map is an essential part of an intentional journey.

I became acutely aware of this while travelling on vacation with my family in the USA. Whenever we had no GPS or map, we ended up on wrong roads and in wrong places – we took huge detours, did a lot of re-routing, wasting time. This led to fatigue because of detours (especially when walking!), frustration and disappointment – missing things because we were not in time.

**No map = wrong destination.**



On the other hand, when we did have maps in hand, we managed to get from where we were, to where we wanted to be, in the best time and by the best route. We moved around more effectively, got more done, we were more successful at sticking to our plan for the day – overall a far better outcome. With a map in hand, we could plan the best way to get where we wanted to be, while cutting out guessing and ending up on wrong paths.

We all know the saying, “Life is a journey”. Just as life is a journey, so is ministry. In this resource, as we look at ministry to children and young people and their families, we will use the analogy of maps and many concepts associated with maps and travelling, to explain and explore vision and strategy on this journey.

This resource is by no means a complete journey, or the end of the journey. The hope is that it will mark the start of a journey – a very important, rewarding and life-giving journey within your faith and wider community.

So gather others – map carriers, navigators and drivers – and get started!

Each section has a set of questions to help you in your conversations. These might spark additional questions and more conversation – and that is great!

### What is covered in this resource?

- A. VISION and STRATEGY
- B. 3 STRATEGIES
- C. ROAD CODE
- D. ROAD MARKERS
- E. 10 TOP TIPS
- F. HELPFUL RESOURCES

# A. Vision and Strategy

When you travel, you need to know where you are starting from, and where you are going.

An overview map will show you your starting point, and your end destination. It is like a “big picture” of the journey and will help you plan your journey.

In Ministry, your map should have a starting point – knowing where you are (your current REALITY) and an end destination – where you believe the ministry is going/God is leading you (your VISION).

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **Where are we starting from? (CURRENT REALITY)**

- What is our current reality? Where are we at?
- What do we believe about children and their faith journey?
- What do we believe about children and their relationship with God and the church?
- What do we believe about families in church?
- And families in our community?

### **Points to help your discussion along:**

#### **Do we believe that:**

Children matter to God? Children are fellow pilgrims on a faith journey? They play a part in God’s “Big Story”? Children have value to add, serving to do, love to give, wisdom and insight to share, influence to exercise?

#### **If we believe this:**

- What are we doing to show that we believe this?
- What do the children and families in our church think/perceive we believe?
- And the children and families in our community?
- Why?

You have a biblical mandate to create a vision for your church, which includes children and young people as a highest priority!

**Jesus demonstrated to us:**

- how to love and bless children (Mark 10:13-16)
- how to use their gifts in ministry (John 6:9-11)
- that they should be nurtured in the faith (Matt 18:1-7)
- that they can offer up praise and worship to God (Matt 21:16; Luke 2:41) and
- that they are loved by God and should be embraced as members of a faith community (Matt 18:10; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 17:1-2)

**DISCUSSION:**

**Where are we going? (VISION)**

- What would it look like in your church, if children were seen and treated as full and active members of the body of Christ, travelling with you on this journey of faith?
- What would it look like if your church had a vision which included children and young people and their families as a highest priority?
- What would it take for your church to formulate such a vision and to make this your new reality?
- What would be the outcome of such a vision?
- What would be the outcome if you did NOT create such a vision and strove to make it the new reality?
- What is standing in your way of creating such a vision?

**Points to help your discussion along:**

- Imagine a church where every child knows they matter to God, a church where they feel valued, welcome and a sense of belonging, and they know they are part of God's "Big Story" and fellow pilgrims on the faith journey.
- Imagine a church where other adults intentionally support parents in the spiritual nurture of their children, where other adults support and care for children by being role models and mentors, model authentic faith through everyday life, and seek opportunities to serve and be missional alongside children and families.

- Imagine a faith community who engages with a wider community, to positively impact lives and build disciples, through loving and serving and caring. A faith community who is not defined by a building, a set Sunday morning service slot or a specific style of worship. A faith community embracing a changing, challenging world, where children and their families struggle to meet the demands of life, and desperately need Jesus.

## Once you have established your VISION, you need to communicate it!

It is very ineffective to try and pull a group of travellers in a direction, if they have no idea where they are going! Often what de-rails the greatest of visions, is the lack of communication about where we are going. It is not enough to communicate once what your vision is, and expect others to hold on tight for the ride and still be on board once you have hit the first bump or gone around that sharp bend. You need to communicate your vision often, and from different places on your journey, and in different ways. Share it through a sermon. Declare it in conversation. Use social media, newsletters, your weekly bulletin – whatever your faith community uses to communicate. Fit it into the communication “rhythm” of your church. Communicate often and with enthusiasm!

A vision will also not stick, if people do not buy into it. What will make them buy into it? When they understand the **“WHY”**. When they get the NEED. When they can answer the question, **“What do we stand to lose, if we don’t do this?”** When people connect emotionally to the vision, they will want to be on the journey with you. Once they are on the journey with you, they become stakeholders and advocates and voices on the journey.

## To travel to your destination, you need the right vehicle.

When you have your starting point (the current REALITY) and end destination (the VISION) in clear sight, you are ready to determine the next important aspect of the journey:

HOW are we going to get from where we are now, to where we want to be? How are we going to travel? How are we going to make the vision a reality?

You have to choose the right vehicle for the journey. Choosing the right vehicle for your ministry journey, means formulating a STRATEGY. Your strategy will be the chosen mode of travel to reach your VISION.

There will always be many options to choose from: do we fly, travel by train, sail, bus, cycle, go by car or walk? What will be the right vehicle for your faith community to take the journey? Might you start with one specific mode of transport, and later add another? Will one vehicle be a better option for the start of your journey, than another?

### **DISCUSSION:**

#### **How are we going to get there? (STRATEGY)**

- What would it look like if you had a strategy for faith formation from birth to adulthood?
- How would it be different from your current reality, if your strategy gave you a clear direction and helped you to be intentional and make every week count?
- What would it look like to develop a navigation system, by which you could measure everything you do, or consider doing, in your church?

# B. Three Strategies

Figuring out **how** we are going to get there, means formulating a strategy. Finding the right **vehicles** that will take us from where we are now, to where we want to be. The vehicles that will reflect **what we believe**: that children matter to God!

There are three intentional, effective vehicles our churches should consider, if we believe that children matter to God and are fellow Kingdom pilgrims on the faith journey.



## B1. Travel by Bus: INTERGENERATIONAL FAITH COMMUNITIES

Because life does not happen in silos and we all need each other, and because we all have value to add and something special to bring on the journey, we travel on the bus together. Everyone can come on board for the journey: babies and toddlers fit in, with their strollers and squeaky toys; the primary aged kids fit in, with their skate boards and sports equipment; the teenagers fit in, with their devices and weird music; the adults fit in – mums, dads, grandparents, uncles and aunts, singles, old and young, big and small. We all fit on the bus and can travel together.

Having a strategy for intergenerational faith formation is the vehicle that will take you all on the journey together. It is the space where generations bring what they have to offer, support one another through love and care, do life and faith together, learn from one another, serve together with their gifts and talents and passion, celebrate together and make a difference in the world, together. It will be different in every context. There is no “one size fits all”. There are different buses for different faith communities.

### DISCUSSION:

#### Travel by Bus

- What might this strategy look like in your context?
- Who is on your bus?
- How will you make sure everyone gets on the bus?
- How will their presence on the bus, affect the journey?
- How will their presence on the bus affect others on the bus?
- Who will be driving the bus?





## **B2. Travel by Car/Family Vehicle: PARTNERING WITH PARENTS/FAMILIES**

Travel by car – the family car. We all know that families are as diverse as it comes. Whether the family needs a station wagon to fit them all in, or whether a Smart Car will be enough for the solo mum and her toddler, or a motor cycle for the dad and his middle-schooler, it is a crucial strategy for the church to travel alongside parents and families on the journey.

Reggie Joiner says, “Every person who is raising, nurturing and parenting a kid or teenager, matters. Regardless.” Why? Because they matter to God! And to their kids! And their kids matter to them! And to God!

No one has more potential to influence a child, than a parent (grandparents/ caregivers could be the substitute where parents are absent). The Church has on average about 40 hours a year to influence a child. In reality, it is probably more in the region of 25 hours a year. A parent has approximately 3000 hours a year! It is no rocket science: what happens at home is more important than what happens at church!

What would happen if all you did was help the average parent to do something more for their child’s faith development, than what they are currently doing? What if... a dad simply prayed with his son for the first time? A grandma read a Bible story to her grandchild? A single mom got connected to a community of faith? A mum and dad got to have a great conversation about life issues and faith with their young teens?

### **DISCUSSION:**

#### **Travel by Car/Family Vehicle**

- What “vehicles” are your families travelling in/on? Small cars, motor cycles, people movers? In other words, who are your families? What do they look like? Who are the people who are part of the families in your context?
- What challenges do they face on their journey?
- How can you travel alongside them?
- What would you be doing, if you were constantly looking for ways to build a bridge to the families in your context?
- What would you be doing if you were looking for ways to support and defend, encourage and refresh, invite and involve, include and remind, love and serve, honour and celebrate, respect and esteem, equip and train parents/grandparents/ caregivers?



### **B3. Travel on Foot/Walk: ENGAGING WITH WIDER COMMUNITY/WHANAU**

When we walk/travel on foot, we are far more able to connect with everyone along the way. We can pause and connect, we can talk while we walk together, or we can sit down together for a rest. We can get others along the way to join us, to play with us, to walk or run together. We are more in touch with everything happening in the community, when we are on foot.

Walking is about community. Our wider community. Our wider family. Our whanau.

#### **A few important points to remember:**

- Our churches are all part of wider communities.
- As faith communities, we value and care for our wider/local communities and we want to intentionally love, serve and welcome the children and families.
- The church in the community matters.
- It is important to understand the community your church is part of.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

##### **Travel on Foot/Walk**

- What might this strategy look like in your context?
- Who will walk with you?
- What will you discover/see/notice when you travel on foot through your community?
- What is the “climate” in your community? What is causing this climate?
- Who can you love, serve and welcome?
- How can you do this?
- What factors are impacting your engagement with your community?
- Who can you partner with along the way?

## c. Road Code

When we travel on any road, and by any means of transport, we need to know the road code. These are basics every driver must understand, in order to obtain a licence to drive. When we are in ministry, knowing the Road Code and applying it to our journey, will help us journey safer, longer, stronger and more effectively.



### **STOP**

- S** = Slow Down
- T** = Take time to pray, ask God, reflect
- O** = Observe where God is already at work
- P** = Proceed with God's guidance



### **Be INTENTIONAL**

**Perceive it** – know and understand your communities (faith & wider)

**Picture it** – create a vision to inspire others

**Plan it** – your strategy, action steps and time frames

**Prepare** – resources, safety, people, places and programmes

**WHO? WHERE? WHAT? WHEN? WHY? HOW?**



## CHANGE the thinking

**Overcome obstacles** – don't allow them to trip you up!

**Find new ways** – don't be stuck in a "single-minded" approach!

**Change the mind set** about what "church" is – "In here" vs. "Out there"!

**Thinking and doing outside the square** – challenge the way in which it has always been done!



## PARTNER with others on the journey

Schools

Other churches

Sports clubs

Retirement homes

Community organisers

Para-church organisations



## TRAFFIC LIGHT assessment – what in your ministry should you:

**Red** = Stop doing?

**Orange** = Continue doing?

**Green** = Start doing?

## D. Road Markers

Any good map contains road markers – information to help you make good, informed decisions on your journey.



### Road information

State highways, main roads, country roads, dirt roads, toll roads – **what information do you have about your chosen route?** Some roads are good to take; others are best avoided. Some might cost you, but it might take you to your end destination quicker. Is it worth the investment?



### Places of interest

Places worthwhile visiting, spending time – **don't miss the special pause points in your ministry!** Listening to a child's story of what happened at school; sitting down with an exhausted parent and telling them they are doing a great job; taking that volunteer for a cup of coffee to say thank you and how much you value them; hearing God whispering to you, "Well done! Now be still and breathe."



### Warning signs

Sharp bends, falling rocks, slippery surfaces, dead ends, road works – **what are the warning signs in your context?** Be alert, listen and look out for signs! Volunteers losing interest; fatigue – yourself and others. Are there concerns from parents? Are there safety issues cropping up?

# E. 10 Top Tips

These tips help make your journey memorable. When you take note of these tips and apply them to your journey, you will enjoy your journey and be able to look back and share your experience in a positive, constructive way.

## 1. Compass

– the True North – always in and through God, not yourself!

## 2. Plan ahead

– time frames, external factors, seasons, community climate

## 3. Stay hydrated

– learn, grow, personal development

## 4. Wear comfortable clothing

– sustainability, perseverance

## 5. Stop to rest

– self-care, life balance

## 6. Lookout points

– step back, assess, adjust

## 7. Emergency services

– know where to go, where and who to ask for help

## 8. Snap a photo

– celebrate successes

## 9. Travel together

– team, church leadership, parents, congregation, others

## 10. Playgrounds

– have FUN on your journey!

## F. Helpful Resources

This is by no means a comprehensive list. However, these resources could help you and your team shape the vision and strategies for your church and ministry. These are some of the writings that have inspired the thinking behind the development of this “MAP your Ministry” resource.

- *Intergenerational Christian Formation – Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*: Holly Catterton Allen & Christine Lawton Ross
- *Intergenerate – Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*: Holly Catterton Allen
- *Collide – Exploring Intergenerational Ministry*: Tammy Tolman
- *Explore Together – The Journey*: Lianne Semans Smith & Lee Herdsman
- *Messy Church Theology – Exploring the significance of Messy Church for the wider church*: Edited by George Lings
- *Children’s Ministry in the Way of Jesus*: David M. Csinos & Ivy Beckwith
- *It’s just a Phase, so don’t miss it – Why every life stage of a kid matters, and at least 13 things your church should do about it*: Reggie Joiner & Kristen Ivy
- *Making Vision Stick*: Andy Stanley
- *Changing Lives - The Essential Guide to Ministry with Children and Families*: Dr. Mark Griffiths
- *Kidology Leadership Labs*: Karl Bastian



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