

MSM2-1 Our Plan

Developing a strategy for growth and doing it!

Opening prayer



God of mission,
Who alone brings growth to your Church,
Send your Holy Spirit to give
Vision to our planning,
Wisdom to our actions,
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you,
And in service to our local community,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Bible



⁶ Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸ So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. ⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:6-10 (NIV)

Paul the Apostle shows us how to combine both the strategic and the intuitive approaches. He carefully planned a church planting strategy. Then when God stepped in to guide, he had the intuitive sensitivity to respond.

Can you think of a time when you, as an individual, have sensed God's leading?
Share your experiences in groups of four.

MSM2-2 The 4Ps

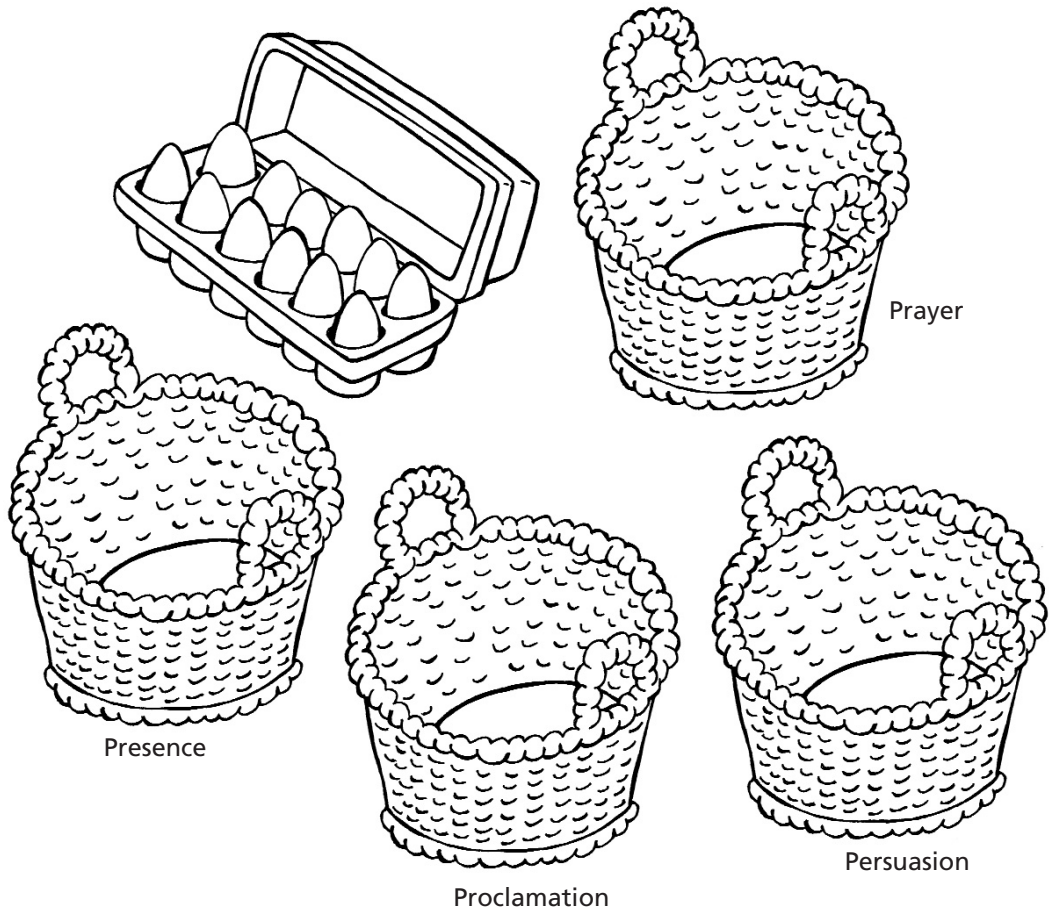
Here is a very brief summary of how the 4 Ps strategy works.

- Step 1** We *pray* specifically for growth and effective evangelism.
- Step 2** We establish *presence*, build friendships and make our presence felt in a positive way both in the local community and amongst all our members' 'human networks'.
- Step 3** We invite our 'presence people' to come and hear a *proclamation* of the Good News. That might be a men's pub night or a major festival. Proclamation isn't about 'Bible bashing' but rather presenting the Christian message in an attractive, interesting and appropriate way.
- Step 4** We invite those interested by our proclamation to join a small '*persuasion*' or inquirers' group, or to take part in a follow-up one-to-one journey into faith.

Exercise: Eggs in baskets



Working on your own, complete the following exercise: You have twelve eggs and four baskets representing prayer, presence, proclamation and persuasion. Divide the eggs into the baskets according to how your church devotes its time, energy and resources.



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Exercise: The annual plan



Draw an annual plan from January to December (or from September to August), slotting in two or three good presence and proclamation events and at least one persuasion (enquirers') course.

Calendar			

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Additional resources

Ten suggestions for prayer events

- Use the Leading your Church into Growth prayer in meetings and services
- Producing a church growth prayer card for the congregation to use
- Church growth prayer days, evenings, events
- Prayer walking your local community
- Growth prayer triplets
- A church growth retreat or quiet day
- Encouraging people to regularly pray for friends and family members who are not yet committed Christians
- Making church growth a focus to a Communion service or an intention at Mass
- Walking round the pews or chairs in church praying for the people who come and praying for empty places to be filled with new people
- Silent prayer and reflection on church growth as individuals and in groups

Ten suggestions for presence events

- Coach trip outing
- Christmas fayre, springtime garden party
- Community action day (litter picking, bulb planting, gardening, community celebration event...)
- Church open day, stalls, trip up the tower, cream teas
- Memories and moments – afternoon for older folks
- Film nights
- Valentine's dinner
- Mums, dads and kids football tournament
- Beetle drive with food
- Crazy olympics for families

Ten suggestions for proclamation events

- Food and speaker event (breakfasts, curry nights, medieval banquets...)
- All Souls' service
- Back to Church Sunday
- Mission weekend with guest speaker
- Themed outreach evening (chocolate, sports, quiz night...)
- Any questions event in a local pub
- Local pilgrimage – with short time of reflection
- Big stories – one or two local people talk about their life and faith, plus a speaker
- Big God night – questions, apologetics
- Reel issues – Using clips from popular films to talk about life and faith

Ten suggestions for persuasion events

- Using table talk or puzzling questions resources
- Running an inquirers' course (Start!, Alpha, Emmaus, Christianity Explored etc)
- Searching questions – discussion events
- Themed presentation/discussion evening (faith and science, God and suffering, other faiths...)
- Activity day with natural opportunities to talk and discuss (craft, church walk, outdoor challenges and activities)
- Agnostics Anonymous group
- 'If you could ask God one question – what would it be?' Apologetics evening
- Encounter evening – Exploring Christian spirituality through creative prayer stations
- Book or film club – with group discussion
- Working one-to-one with people

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Response boxes

What things have struck you during this session?

In order to help our church grow:

- What should I be doing as an individual?

- What should we be doing as a church?

You might want to record your responses in the boxes above.

Your group leader may ask to collect responses from you so that some anonymous feedback can be given to your church leadership team.

Reflection and prayer



²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said:

“People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious.

²³ *For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship – and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.*

²⁴ *“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.*

²⁵ *And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything.*

Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

²⁶ *From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.*

²⁷ *God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.* ²⁸ *‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’*

²⁹ *“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by human design and skill.* ³⁰ *In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.* ³¹ *For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”*

³² *When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.”*

³³ *At that, Paul left the Council.* ³⁴ *Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.*

Acts 17:22-34 (NIV)