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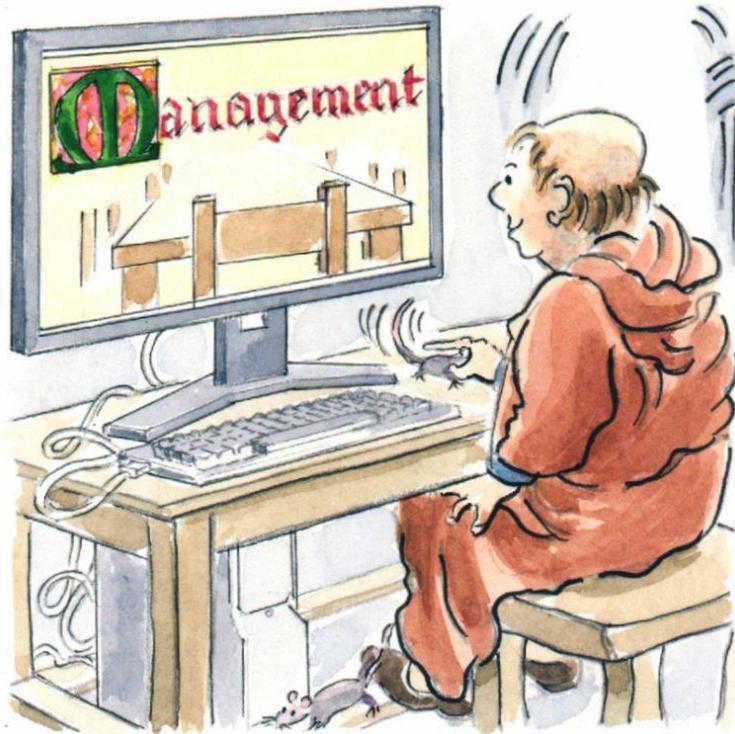
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Planning and priorities

Organising your life and ministry



Diocese of London – 8th October 2019

If you prefer these notes on screen, you may access the pdf at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/News> and then the item for today's date.

1: A planning tool for your life

The first need is for a clear context for your life

You cannot control your ministry if you have no clear context in which you are working. First, others will control it for you. Secondly, you will have no criteria to enable you to plan the detail. Here is one approach to determining a personal 'big picture'.

Your life seen within a typical planning process

You may be used to ideas of purpose, values, vision, etc. for an organisation, but what about applying them first to you, and secondly to your church(es)? Here is a jargon-proof set of questions (*with some explanation for those who cannot survive without the normal words!*).

- 1 **What do I long to see happen?**
The 'big picture' vision for my life
- 2* **Why am I here?**
The 'purpose' question – but it is worth including negatives
- 3 **What am I aiming to do, and for whom?**
An alternative for Q2
- 4* **What is the distinctive way I go about things?**
This is a 'values' question
- 5 **What is my story so far?**
The need to 'remember', and the value of a personal 'time-line'
- 6* **What might God do through me?**
The main 'vision' question, but actually one of faith and prayer
- 7 **What are the main options open to me as I work towards this?**
This is an issue of making choices
- 8 **What resources do I have and need?**
Internal (eg. health, skills) and external (eg. people, finance)
- 9* **Where do I plan to get to this year?**
This is what I term 'aims' – steps towards the 'vision'
- 10 **What are the stepping-stones towards these points?**
Precise points by date or other measurable feature, what I term 'targets' towards 'aims'
- 11 **Where may I get it wrong?**
A very Christian question to ask at this point
- 12* **Where have I got to?**
The issue of review

* These form the key sequence of purpose, values, vision, aims and review. See Article A4, *Twelve questions to help you plan*, in the Resources section of my website for an application of this to a church.

2: A planning tool for your ministry

Here is one possible approach based on the Ordinal

Your role is to lead God's people in the offering of praise and the proclamation of the gospel... You are to be a servant and a shepherd among the people to whom you are sent. You are to be a messenger, watchman and steward of the Lord.

Your responsibilities

1 **To proclaim the gospel**

You are to lead Christ's people in proclaiming the gospel, so that the good news of salvation may be heard in every place.....

2 **To baptise new disciples**

You are to baptise new disciples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and to walk with them in the way of Christ, nurturing them in the faith.

3 **To teach the Scriptures**

You are to teach and to admonish, to feed and provide for God's family, With others you are to make clear the Scriptures, to preach the word in and out of season....

4 **To lead in worship**

You are to preside at the Lord's table and, with others, to lead his people in worship, offering with them a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving....

5 **To minister to the world**

You are to resist evil, support the weak, defend the poor and intercede for all in need. You are to minister to the sick and prepare the dying for their death.

6 **To foster people's gifts**

Guided by the Spirit, you are to discern and foster the gifts of all God's people, that the whole Church may be built up in unity and faith.

7 **To stir up your own gift**

You are in, the strength of the Holy Spirit, continually to stir up the gift of God that is in you, to make Christ known among all whom you serve....

8 **To accept discipline**

You are to accept the discipline of this Church and respect authority duly exercised within it and, when necessary and with others, to minister such discipline yourself.

9 **To order your life**

You are to be diligent in prayer, in reading the Scriptures, and in all studies that will deepen your faith and fit you to bear witness to the truth of the gospel. You are to fashion your own life and that of your household according to the way of Christ....

Remember always with thanksgiving that you are entrusted with the privilege of leading Christ's own flock, bought by the shedding of his blood on the cross. It is to him that you will be accountable for your stewardship of his people.

You cannot bear the weight of this calling in your own strength, but only by the grace and power of God. Pray therefore that your love of people and your understanding of the Scriptures may grow daily. Pray earnestly for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

adapted freely from Common Worship Ordination Services © Archbishops' Council 2013

Taken from Training Notes TN78, *The role of a church leader*, in the Resources section of my website. See also TN87, *What to look for in your leaders*.

3: A planning tool for your months

Within this life and ministry context you might plan achievements in one year

Aims – specific projects

Your role is at heart fairly static, but within that context you need specific priorities or aims for each period (say, each year). Most of these will be what you want to achieve by a given date.

If you have clear priorities in life or ministry, where do you need to get to by, say, this time next year? This is bringing the big picture planning down in scale.

Aims change year by year, unlike purpose. They can include ideas of activity, relationships, seasonal issues, personal discipleship. In a curacy you might have specific aims you wish to achieve by the time you move on.

Dated events throughout the year

You may have specific deadlines you need to meet at various points in the year. These might include

- Deadlines that are some way ahead: eg. special services or speaking engagements, booking your family holiday, planning your move from curacy.
- Regular activities not to be forgotten: eg. a bimonthly magazine article deadline.
- Monthly/weekly activity that needs to be fitted in: eg. sermon preparation, visits to the gym, claiming expenses.

And so: a monthly calendar

This acts as a monthly reminder of out-of-the-ordinary activity. It does not give specific dates (we get to that in a minute), but lists what needs to be done that month.

This is the half-way stage between the big picture priorities for the year and the daily detailed activity. It links the two.

The need for time out

Your annual aims need to be considered at some kind of 'planning retreat'. Take time away for at least a full day (overnight even better). Then your monthly calendar merits a monthly session of planning, reviewing and praying. See Training Notes TN54, *Creating space for a Planning Retreat*.

Resources on my website you might find helpful on today's overall theme

<https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources>

Articles

- A4 Twelve questions to help you plan – *revised into a slightly different context on point 1 above*
 A25 Working from home – boundaries, discipline and space

Training Notes

- TN7 Ideas for how to make time for life
 TN11 Keeping a time log
 TN23 How to do 'To Do' lists – *see point 4 in these notes*
 TN43 Did Jesus use an iPhone? – essential reading to back up today's material
 TN54 Creating space for a Planning Retreat – *see point 3 in these notes*
 TN62 Know what distracts you
 TN78 The role of a church leader – *this is the background to point 2 in these notes*
 TN84 How to say 'No' when you should – *this is vital if you are to stick to your priorities*
 TN91 An MOT for disciples of Jesus
 TN106 Talk about taking time 'off'
 TN112 Set my leaders free!

You might also like to follow me on Twitter @johnntruscott.

4: A planning tool for your days

This is the next step on from the previous page

I keep coming across people whose 'To Do' lists are causing them extra stress and little practical help. They are misusing this simple tool. To make them work:

- 1 Differentiate tasks by how long you expect them to take**
 Some jobs will take five minutes, others may take several hours. Putting them next to each other on one list is not very sensible.
- 2 Differentiate tasks by when you need to do them**
 Nothing is more demoralising than having a 'To Do' list that never empties. So schedule when you will do things in a realistic way, and then complete your work each day!
- 3 Differentiate tasks by how important they are**
 Have some idea of what will have to drop off if you are too pressed and what must be done whatever happens. Also what could be done by others and what must be done by you. See TN23 on the website for a little more detail on all this.

And hence the idea of a diary rather than the back of an envelope. Here is a page layout that allows you follow all three of the above principles. You may well prefer a digital equivalent.

A4 or A5 DIARY PAGE Timed engagements (inc timed phone calls, etc.)
Major items of work
Quick tasks to remember
Personal tasks

A system such as this (design one that fits you) helps you not to forget anything that you need to do, ensures you do it on schedule, and allows you to relax.

You fill it with daily issues that tell you of things to do, plus the monthly listing on the previous page that needs then to be fed into a daily diary of this kind.

Some clergy tell me that the idea works a treat, but they prefer to work it on a weekly diary basis rather than a daily basis. Fine – find what suits you best.

For further detail on this idea, see Training Notes TN23, *How to do 'To Do' lists*, on the website.