

MAP for Derby Diocesediscerning the angel of the church

# introduction

Many of the tools we use to review where we are may be quite ‘fact’ based, consisting of surveys and statistics. But not everyone thinks about things in this way – in fact, some will prefer to tell you what they feel or can imagine, rather than what they think or know. This exercise may help those people who prefer to think creatively or imaginatively about where the church is. The exercise can be used in small groups, or as a whole church (perhaps as a part of an away day).

The exercise is designed to help gain insight into the essential character of the church where it is carried out – its ‘angel’, in the same sense as the angels of the churches in the book of Revelation. It seeks to use creative language and imagery, like the book of Revelation itself, to try to describe something that might otherwise be difficult for someone to put into words.

The exercise is contained in the book *The Healthy Churches’ Handbook* by Robert Warren, and is based around the first part of Revelation. Here, John is given the prophetic words of Christ to the seven churches. In each case, the words are addressed ‘to the angel of the church in…’. The words are not addressed to a literal angel, but to the character and heart of the church – that which reflects its personality and centre. So, the angel of the church is all these things.

# when to use this resource

‘Discerning the angel of the church’ is most appropriate for use during stage two of MAP for Derby Diocese, to help the church to reflect on their journey toward God’s calling so far. It is particularly helpful whilst considering the following question in that stage:

* To where has God brought us?

# the process

The exercise can be used in diverse ways, depending on the context and setting it is being used within; how you use it is up to you. You may wish to introduce the exercise with a reflection or prayer around Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Certainly the results can be used to lead people into prayer, seeking God His wisdom concerning the angel of your church.

The best way to approach the exercise is with space and prayerfulness. The exercise to be used is attached to this document. Feel free to adapt it to your own use.

discerning the angel of our church

 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to life:”
*Revelation 2:8*

The *colour* of the life of our church is…

… because …

Our *church buildings* says …

The *culture of our local community* can be best described using these words …

The *history of our church* is a story of …

The *best thing* about this church is …

What is *missing* in this church is …

*Relationships within our church* are best described as …

What we are *trying to do* here is …

And so *I believe that Jesus would write this to the angel of our church* …