

Tell and Teach

The Ukrainian Bible Society reported about the recent demand for Bibles “We cannot talk long term or even mid-term. We are talking about days. For several weeks we’ve got what we need. We wouldn’t even be able to get anything inside the country. We don’t know what kind of Ukraine there will be in a month. Our stock of Bibles is quickly diminishing. We have many more requests for Scriptures than we are even able to provide. We need more Bibles because there are millions of people who are moving from the East and South to the West, and who are in desperation. The number of Scriptures we have and the amount of need we already see – and nobody knows how things will unfold – the demand might be way, way greater.”

We have many more requests for Scriptures than we are even able to provide. How often do you hear these words today?

Alongside Bible distribution, their colleagues in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries are also planning to provide Bible-based trauma healing to those who have been impacted and displaced by the war.

So, we discover that in the midst of this fatal conflict, in the midst of their tears and fears, lies the need for God's Word. In the midst of this war in Ukraine there is a hunger for God's Word. These people are searching for God's plan for them.

Not only do they need physical help, but also spiritual help, and the Scottish Bible Society is working with the Bible Society of Ukraine as they bring the hope of God’s Word to a nation overwhelmed by fear.

That word *hope* is crucial for that is what the Bible brings to us.

Throughout the Bible we see that God always has a plan – whether it's creation and his plan to develop Planet Earth; the plan given to Noah to save the world through building the Ark; the plan to build a Temple; to build the wall of Jerusalem and then moving into the New Testament – his master plan, that the world would be saved through Jesus bringing in God's Kingdom; this being realised through His body on earth, the Church. God has a plan! That simple fact teaches us that God has a plan for us also here at Cadder Church. In Jesus' famous prayer, he taught, “*Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.*”

If that is the case, what is God's plan for us here at Cadder? Does he have a plan? Are we part of it? Or do we just go blindly into the future with no

regard for God's plan, somehow hoping that everything will happen naturally.

The Apostle Paul wrote that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. [2 Timothy]

Jesus said that the wise man builds his house on his words, and when the storms come as they surely have in Ukraine then there is a foundation which we can depend on.

At this moment in time, a great storm is blowing against the church and all that it stands for. There are two pillars in Glasgow down at the Clyde, the site of an ancient bridge, these pillars stand alone now, but inscribed on them are the words, "Greatness stands firm in the storm."

This is a time for us to stand strong to what we believe and to trust in Jesus. Jesus was speaking about such a storm that will blow away those churches that have no foundation. Just like the wolf blew away the houses of straw and wood.

This parable of Jesus comes at the end of his Sermon on the Mount, and it is a sting in the tail for it clearly reminds people, that there is one way to God, and that is through Jesus. In the words of Dr. Michael Green, pastor, author and lecturer, "We can either build on Him and His teaching, which we will find is as solid as a rock; or else we can build on any other religion or philosophy in the world, and we will find that it is sand, and in the last day it will spell ruin."

Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount by inviting his hearers to ask themselves the vital question, *how are you building your life? What are you building it on?* He wants his hearers to ask themselves, whether or not they are building on the only foundation that will bear their weight.

This seems to be an arrogant claim and could be easily interpreted that Christians have the only and best religion. But Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great German theologian, made the statement, Jesus came to destroy religion.

What he meant by that is religion which is tied up with all human effort, and attempts to please God will ultimately fail.

What Jesus offers is totally different, his approach is not reaching up to God but God reaching down to us, that we might respond to his love and grace. Jesus does not call us into a religion, he calls us into a relationship with God. For Jesus is the revelation of God; never has there been such a true likeness. In Jesus we see the King coming to bring in the Kingdom. He is no less than God's rescue for men and woman lost in sin and self centeredness and this is His plan and only plan and it's our responsibility to align ourselves with his will.

So, if we believe this and take this message to heart, then it leads us onto the final reading in Matthew's Gospel which is Jesus's command to the disciples, "To go and tell the good news of Jesus and his Kingdom and to teach and baptise people into God's Kingdom. "

So, we must build on the rock said Jesus. This is his call and this is his mission. We must hear and obey. Not just hear but obey; obedience that transforms our characters, affects our relationships and marks us out as servants of the King.

The Mission of the Church is the mission of Christ.

At the heart of every thriving church is the Gospel, for this is God's plan. If we don't have the Gospel message, as our heartbeat, then the heartbeat of the church will slowly die.

The CofS has adopted the 5 Marks of Mission as the way to revive and sustain the Gospel in our churches today.

It begins with two strong foundations just like those two great concrete pillars in the Clyde. Tell the Gospel and Teach believers – Tell and Teach, are vital marks for every healthy church.

Over the last year, our Kirk Session delegated me, Gillian Crompton and Dianne Kurth to help develop a model that will help us to build a strong Church life here at Cadder. We've come up with the Cadder Growth Structure which the Kirk Session has been approving all along the journey. We know that unless we engage with the 5 Marks of Mission, we will struggle to survive as a church.

The first Mark of Mission is to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom – to Tell others.

And the second Mark to teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

Summarised for us in 2 words “Tell and Teach” this is how we are approaching our growth structure.

Those two Marks are about building the church, on the solid rock, which Jesus speaks about, through telling the good news of Jesus and his Kingdom and teaching and nurturing people in their faith.

How we are doing it? Well we believe that team work is essential for God's enterprise, He has instructed his Church, to be his body, and each part to play its important role. It's not the task of one person but a team.

We have three teams under those 2 Marks of Mission. Tell and Teach.

Those are Worship and Spiritual Leadership, Nurture, and Communications. Each team has two team leaders.

Firstly, Worship and Spiritual Leadership is led by me and Gavin Halliday -

The remit of this team is to

- Support the Minister to develop Sunday worship in church – including through the use of technology; music and all age participation
- Develop a teaching programme to share the message of Jesus in both formal and informal ways, with members and with those who want to know more about our Christian faith (including, for example, Alpha course materials)
- Explore the use of technology across church buildings to support opportunities for weekday worship, on line Bible learning and outreach into the wider community to share the message of Jesus
- Explore other opportunities for wider use of the church buildings for worship and learning
- Create opportunities to develop leadership skills to support future sustainability and growth of the church

Now that's a broad sweep but as you can see it's an attempt to Tell and Teach within the Church; To build on what we are currently doing, but also develop areas that will help us in our mission.

Secondly, Nurture under the leadership of Anne Budd and Laura Tobin – Their remit is

- Work to understand the interests and needs of the younger generation within and outside the church
- Help children, young people and families discover Jesus and love the Church
- Create opportunities for children, young people and families to become involved in church life and create their own spaces for fellowship and growth around the church
- Support existing youth groups and child focused activities to thrive and develop

Thirdly, Communications led by Brian Jilks and Helen McKnight

- Develop & maintain the church website
- Explore wider social media opportunities to make members and people out with the church more aware of our mission and church activities, including development of a new 'Church Life Calendar' and 'Cadder Life Walkabout' video clips
- Develop ways in which to make members aware of jobs to be done around the church and other volunteering opportunities

We invited members of this congregation to be part of these teams, and we are delighted that some responded and have helped the teams to construct plans for next year. So each of our 10 teams are coming up with a Cadder Plan for 2023, and all the activities will be put into a large calendar of events, which will be published and made visible for all to see.

This is how Cadder Church is engaging with the Marks of Mission; we are drawing up a plan, which we believe is God's plan to take us forward.

The events on the plan will be reviewed, and we will consider what worked well and what could be better and so each year, our calendar of events, will be recreated to keep everything fresh and moving forward.

We don't expect to get everything right, and this will be a huge learning curve for us all, but it is a brave and bold attempt at building on the 5 Marks of Mission here at Cadder Church. If we fail to plan, we plan to fail.

I will be touching on other Marks of Mission in future services, and how our resources such as finance and property will support and enable our mission plan to go forward.

But let me return to Jesus and his analogy of building a house, it begins with strong foundation, it begins with much work and preparation and over the last two and half years, throughout lockdown, we have been working behind the scenes, digging the foundations, through two years of growing young, exploring with 23 other Church of Scotlands, how we can build a strong foundation for our churches, and the last year we have been exploring what that may look like in a team setting at Cadder Church.

But we need all to play our part, everyone needs to support the structure in whatever way they can, whether that's praying, supporting events, being part of a team or leading; it involves us all as we seek to build a church that will survive this storm, and will be a place of blessing for the future. If you would like more detail about this, please get in touch with myself or Gillian or Dianne, and we will gladly share with you.

Jesus said, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Amen.