

Dumfries Baptist Church



making a difference

www.dumfriesbaptistchurch.org.uk

Towards
2020

Vision
Statement
June 2007

Introduction

We stand together at an exciting moment in history for the Church in Dumfries. The 21st century has brought many new challenges to our church and to our communities but we believe that God has brought us together, equipped us and is continually equipping his church to meet the challenges that are before us. As we seek to live as the people of God in Dumfries and in its surrounding community, we long to be an effective witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in 21st century Britain as the early church was in 1st century Palestine.

This document seeks to lay out the eternal biblical purposes of God for the church and will consider a variety of strategies that may help us to achieve them.

I believe that healthy churches will grow, Jesus said "...I will build my church..." Matthew 16v18. It is God's plan for his church to grow in size, faith, love and evangelistic impact. Finding the right balance between worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism will create a healthy growing church.

We live at a time where every year there seems to be a new technique or strategy for church growth. However, by writing down the eternal purposes of God for the church and making these our vision, I pray we will avoid getting sidetracked in the years to come from fulfilling his calling on our lives. Proverbs 19v21 "Many are the plans in a man's heart but it is God's purposes that prevail."

The early church shared a vision, strategy and support network for the church that we read of in Acts chapter 4 v32 "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had."

To be in one in heart is to share the same vision, to want the same things. When these things are what God wants then the church is not only united together but united in Christ. To be one in mind is to share the same strategy about how we will achieve the vision. And to share everything we have with one another is to provide the necessary support to carry out the strategy which will see the vision fulfilled.

As we have seen in our small groups over the last 4 months, the main purposes of the church flow straight from the lips of Jesus in the great commission and the great commandment of the New Testament. I believe that when brought together in balance these are purposes God will bless and use to grow his kingdom in this community.

Alan

This report is circulated in advance of a special church meeting to be held on the 29th August 2007 at 7.30pm. Please take the opportunity to prayerfully read this report through several times in advance of the meeting.

One Heart – A Common Vision

The only vision worth having is a God-given vision. Jesus gave us His Father's vision for the Christian and the Church. It is a vision that he intended should shape everything in our lives as Christians, including the Church.

Matthew 22v37-39

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself."

Matthew 28v19-20

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

God's Purposes for the Church

1) Magnify – “love the Lord your God”

The church is called to worship God, to exalt, magnify and celebrate his name together. (Psalm 34, Psalm 122) The early church was known for meeting for worship in public places and in homes. (Acts 20v20) Singing and prayer were key components in the church. Together we celebrate God's presence.

2) Ministry – “love your neighbour”

The church is called to love our neighbours whether they are strangers that we meet one day or life long friends outside of the church. (Luke 10v25ff) This will mean practical examples of love as well as simple verbal expressions of support and encouragement. It will involve us in serving the needs of our community as a whole as well as individuals within it. Together we demonstrate God's love in practical ways.

3) Mission – “go and make disciples”

The command to go into all the world is repeated throughout scripture. Our mission is primarily to the people of Dumfries, secondly to those in the region, thirdly to the wider community of Britain and ultimately to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1v8) Mission calls for a verbal explanation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (Romans 10v17) Together we communicate God's word.

4) Membership – “baptising them”

Belonging to a group of believers is of vital importance to any believer. There are 58 “one another” statements in the Bible. God has given us one another to fulfil his purposes for our lives. We are called to be committed as much to each other as we are to Christ. (Ephesians 2v19-22, Romans 12v5) Together we welcome all God's family.

5) Maturity – “teach them to obey everything”

The Christian faith is a daily journey of growing in the grace and knowledge of God. The Bible encourages us to grow in our understanding of our faith and the lifestyle that flows from that knowledge. (Philippians 1v9-11, 1Peter 2v2, Hebrews 5v13-14) Together we educate God's people.

Purpose Statement

To lovingly bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus and a place of membership in his family, helping one another to develop Christ-like maturity and equipping one another for ministry and mission as we go into God's world in order to magnify God's name.

One Mind – A Common Strategy

The common strategy speaks of how we will fulfil our purposes. There are seven steps in the journey from non-believer to disciple. These vital steps have been identified by Christians throughout the world and throughout history. However, they all rest on one essential principle: *It is the responsibility of every believer to be a witness to Jesus Christ.* Jesus said "you shall be my witnesses", not just those with the gift of evangelism but all. God's strategy for reaching a lost world rests on every one of us.

1) Building a relationship

Jesus was known as the friend of sinners and we are called to follow this example. As we go through our life in this world we must encourage every member to make deep friendships with non-Christian people. We are to go rather than to wait for people to come to us. Relationships may also be made corporately through joint acts of ministry. Things like toddlers groups, marriage courses and activities held in the church for different age groups allow time for relationships to be built.

2) Sharing a verbal witness

After establishing a friendship, a time will come when the opportunity arises to explain our faith in Christ. We will know when this time has arrived by prayerfully listening to our friends and to our Lord. Every member of the church should be encouraged and equipped to "give a reason for the hope that is within them."

3) Establish Gospel opportunities

Prayerful discernment is needed at this stage as to whether we should further build the relationship before inviting people along to a gospel event or if indeed we sense the early workings of the Spirit in their lives. It is vital that unbelievers have a variety of opportunities to hear of the faith in an appropriate cultural context. Gospel opportunities come in various forms.

- a) Services - special church services aimed at the unbeliever, such as Christmas services, seeker (guest) services or dedication services.
- b) Courses - such as Alpha or Christianity Explored
- c) One-off events - sports dinner with after dinner speaker, Christian theatre, Christian musicians.

There should be a regular flow and variety of gospel opportunities happening within the church for members to invite their friends to. This is the most common place for conversion.

4) Attending worship/teaching services

God has commanded that believers worship together and magnify his holy name. Worship encourages us and reminds us of the wonder of God and all that he has

done for us. Central to the worship service must also be clear biblical teaching. The worship/teaching service is a vital cornerstone of the Christian life for all members.

5) Participating in a small group

Fellowship, pastoral support, prayer and accountability are all vital ingredients in the maturing of believers. Small groups allow this to happen in an effective way. All members of the church should be encouraged to participate in these groups in order to build up others and be built up themselves.

6) Serving in the Church

As members of the body of Christ, each member has a vital function in maintaining the health and well being of the whole church. Members must be enabled to discover, develop and use their gifts in the church.

7) Stewarding resources

Believers have a responsibility to manage their financial affairs, possessions and time in a way that honours God and recognises his Lordship of all. Generous giving to God and His Church is not an option but an obligation for all members.

Conclusion

The non-Christian who started off as a friend of a Christian at step 1 is now a maturing follower of Christ and is engaged in those same 7 steps; building relationships, witnessing, taking others along to gospel opportunities, attending worship, participating in a small group, serving in the church and stewarding resources. And so the cycle should continue.

From experience, we know that all new disciples come through all seven steps but not always in that order. Many people in society today find themselves feeling as though they belong to the community long before they reach the point of believing.

Share Everything – A Common Support System

Small Groups

All members and associates should be offered the opportunity to belong to a small group. This small group will be the primary place of pastoral care in the church where we learn to love one another and will be a valued expression of our membership together. Small groups will be encouraged to reflect all 5 purposes of the church in the life of the group. As small groups grow and develop they will in all things be expected to promote and maintain the unity of the fellowship.

Diaconate

The church-elected deacons along with the church's pastors are called to serve God and his people through the use of their leadership and administrative gifts. Deacons and pastors will support the day to day running of the church and the organisation of its structures. They will, with all God's people continually seek the mind of Christ for his church in prayer and bring guidance to the church as to the direction they believe he is leading them.

Church Purpose Groups

There will be 5 church purpose groups that will seek to develop the church's understanding and action in the areas of magnification, ministry, mission, membership and maturity. These groups will share their ideas for development with the church and seek to involve those who have particular God given passions and gifts in service. Purpose groups will seek to support individuals, small groups and the collective fellowship as we fulfil the purposes of the church.

Appendix 1:

Church purpose group ideas gleaned from Housegroup Studies Jan – Apr 2007

Magnification Ideas – Look at balance of old and new songs, most people seem to want one traditional hymn included in each service. Look at the use of prayer within the service. Look to use a variety of people in up front presentation. Consider the impact of worship on new people (saying The Grace). Think through how worship can be used for mission. Use more communication methods – drama, puppets, dance etc.

Ministry Ideas – Advice and encouragement groups for: parents, couples, single mums, those with unplanned pregnancies etc. Teenage groups providing recreation, sport, computers. Meeting the needs of the lonely within our community. Litter picking. Presence at psychic fairs, input to school RE programme, needle exchange programme, involvement in local politics and local issues. 2nd hand shop in needy location

Mission Ideas – Talk to God about the people we want to reach. Talk to the people we know about what we have experienced. Go. Look at further use of our buildings for social and community use. Advertise Church events more widely. Use bridging events in small groups and church, like meals and activities with appropriate gospel content. Work Place evangelism support. Toddlers, Quiz Nights, Church Picnics, Ceilidh, Ladies Night, Book café, internet café. Use different venues. Training in mission. Set aside time for non-Christian friends. Courses like Alpha.

Membership Ideas – Structure of care for “one another” not by a few individuals. Share joy and pain. Work hard at getting to know one another's names, Hold on to what unites rather than small differences. Encourage people to be proactive in friendship. Create many small service opportunities. Identify people with pastoral skills and support them in service. Pray for one another in our small groups. Video ministry as well as tape ministry. Have more newcomers' evenings.

Maturity Ideas – Mentoring system. Expository preaching. New Christians need particular “nurture” small group. Christian service opportunities. Make available appropriate courses and conferences. Bible Study notes display and review. Testimonies of those who are maturing. Gift awareness. Send scripture to mobile phones.