

## REPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

### GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2012

*'But grow in the grace, and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.'* (2 Peter 3:18)

During the past year, the Committee has continued to build upon the areas of priority that were identified in the past.

#### DENOMINATIONAL EVENT

The 2011 denominational event, "One World, One Vision, One Mission" took place at Dunblane High School on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August. It was particularly memorable because it came at the end of the Youth Mission involving young people from UCCSA and from the UF Church. Their participation through songs, dance, drama and sharing some of their experiences helped everyone to share in their enthusiasm and excitement and was a great encouragement.

Plans are being made for another event at Dunblane on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August on the theme of: 'Running the Race'. The keynote speaker will be Rev Willie Black, formerly minister of the High Church in Stornoway. Publicity materials will be available shortly.

#### VISITS TO CONGREGATIONS

The Committee is continuing to visit congregations to encourage them to develop a mission strategy. Follow-up visits will take place as appropriate.

#### TELL IT AGAIN

Many people spoke warmly of the presentations during the 2011 General Assembly by Rev David Thompson, Mission Development Officer with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. He returned to Scotland in March for two one day conferences. There was one organised by the Committee at Uddingston: Park on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> when about 30 people were present. This was followed on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> with a conference at Auchterarder organised by the Presbytery of the North when about 70 people attended. It is the hope of the Committee that following these conferences, kirk sessions and others will reflect on how the 'Tell It Again!' material might assist them in work in their local communities. The Committee is most grateful to Mr Thompson for his willingness to come and assist us in this way.

#### DRUMCHAPEL

We continue to be encouraged by the work of the Living Room and of those involved there including Rev Robert Owens, Laura and Gordon Mackenzie. The work at Drumchapel is a reminder of the value of working slowly and patiently over a number of years as relationships are built and contacts made. Whilst there may not have been dramatic results, there is no doubt that many people have been helped and lives have been changed as a result of their contact with the folk at the Living Room. Please continue to pray for those involved as they seek to make the Gospel relevant to individuals within the local community in the midst of the many challenges they face. The Committee continues to give financial support to this valuable work.

#### LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The Committee met with Rev Pauline Steenbergen, Leadership Development Worker with the Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland. This was an opportunity to learn more about resources which are available to promote leadership training

and development; particularly with the Eldership. This is something the Committee will be considering further. It will be an opportunity for fellowship and discussion and information will be included with the Assembly papers.

## **LEADERS' FORUM**

Arrangements are being made to hold a Leaders' Forum on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> June at 2.30 p.m. in Perth U.F Church.

## **PREACHING PLAN**

The Committee is very grateful to Rev J D Neil for his work in preparing material for a Preaching Plan. Some information about this is included as an appendix to this report and the intention is that it will be produced as a leaflet containing further information. This will be circulated to congregations and it is hoped they will find the material of benefit, especially where they do not have a regular preacher.

## **CO-ORDINATED STRATEGY**

All of these things in themselves are very worthy, but it would be the concern of the Committee that some co-ordinated strategy should exist between all the relevant Committees of the Church and within Presbyteries to ensure that proper provision of effective Teaching ministries; community engagement and property development be undertaken by our congregations. The Committee recognise the difficulties in implementing such a strategy, but firmly believe that only with such oversight can the commission of God's Church to be Salt and Light in our contemporary world be fulfilled. The serious lack of Christian Education within many of our congregations has a major impact on the ability of professing Christians to be ambassadors for Christ within their homes, communities and workplaces. Likewise, we can all become so caught up with maintaining the crumbling edifices of our buildings and finances that we lose sight of the real opportunities and challenges that the 'outside' world around us provides.

In the midst of the wider spiritual and moral needs of the nation of Scotland, and with the ongoing challenges that fellow Christian denominations face; the United Free Church needs to have a clearer understanding of what the purpose of God is for it in the spiritual 'marketplace' of 21st century Scotland. Such an understanding will only come about as we pray together; study God's word and reflect together and as we 'bite the bullet' of developing a creative vision for our Presbyteries and congregations.

The Christian Education and Evangelism Committee therefore recommend that a joint consultation between itself, the Ministry Committee and the Administration & Finance Committee takes place to develop such a strategy. A *Taskforce for Ministry and Mission* be formed which would then work with the three presbyteries to see this strategy implemented across our Denomination.

In the name of the Committee

W. BRUCE MCDOWALL	Convener
JAMES D. NEIL	Vice Convener
JOHN O. FULTON	Secretary

Appendix 1

PREACHING PLAN

**THE UNITED FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND**

**AIM:**

To provide congregations and those engaged in preaching and teaching with systematic programmes that will enable growth amongst believers. The programme samples should offer a comprehensive range of teaching on fundamental truths of the Christian faith and its practice based on Scripture and applied relevantly for a 21<sup>st</sup> century Church.

**ADVANTAGES:**

Where there is an *ad hoc* arrangement for pulpit supply such programmes could be taken up by worship leaders to provide a more coherent and comprehensive preaching plan. A Preaching Plan can help provide teaching that covers the main doctrines and practice of the faith, which is unlikely to happen with irregular supply arrangements.

**APPLICATION:**

The Preaching Plan outlines offered should be flexible enough to accommodate special events in congregational, denominational and national life whilst following the Christian year with its festivals. The examples listed are generally readily available and capable of adaptation to meet local needs.

**EXAMPLES OF TEACHING PROGRAMMES**

For truly systematic teaching the preaching plan has to be broad-based and balanced drawing from the whole of Scripture and not from single texts alone. Many notable preachers have taken an 'expository' approach to bible teaching, enabling a deeper understanding of the Scriptures: that said it could diminish the possibilities of a broader sweep of Scripture. More solid teaching will take account of this and illustrate from a wide selection of Scriptures.

In providing examples of Preaching Plans it should be stated that these are only the tip of the ice-berg as far as what is available. Congregations may be quite content to keep the plan simple and follow proscribed Books of the Bible at a pace they are comfortable with.

There is no substitute for The Word of God faithfully preached. Jesus' concern for those called of God is that they might be sanctified by the Truth, God's Word being that Truth (John 17:17). God's Truth is essentially communicated in two ways - one being through trained teachers, the other being by the power of the spirit in revealing truth inwardly to the heart. The examples below are only some of the ways available in teaching from the Word - to that preachers and teachers must trust the Spirit of God to do what only His Spirit can do.

**1. THE REVISED COMMON ORDER (Including LECTIONARY)** is widely used in Presbyterian circles. It provides readings for a three-year programme linking the Gospels and the New Testament as a whole to related passages from the Old Testament, with particular references to the Patriarchs, the Psalms and the Prophets.

It guides the worship leader systematically through the Christian Year starting with Advent in November/December, however it is up to the preacher to prepare the sermon around the provided readings. There is considerable supporting resource available, through books or online, in terms of exposition and application.

The lectionary is available in a variety of published formats and is contained within the Book

of Common Order used by the clergy of many denominations.

**2. BIBLE READING PROGRAMMES** prepared by the Bible Societies, Scripture Union (Daily Bread) and many other Christian agencies and individuals. These have the advantage of providing daily Scripture readings which the congregation can follow and into which preachers may link their sermons.

There is great variety within those programmes - some with lengthier passages to read than others. Some of these programmes may have supporting study notes to accompany them. Some churches have linked the Sunday preaching to a house group's study material.

**3. USE OF RECOGNISED PROGRAMMES** such as THE ALPHA COURSE, CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED and ESSENTIAL 100 (E100), have been successfully incorporated into Services - these have to be thoughtfully applied for they are designed to encourage or challenge faith - support groups should be considered to encourage further discussion, raise questions, or, where there is need, further personal support.

**4. FOLLOWING THE CHRISTIAN YEAR AND DENOMINATIONAL EVENTS**

In holding to the themes that incorporate the Christian year it may also be desirable to include other special days, for example Missionary Sunday.

**5. MAKING USE OF THE CHURCH'S PRAYER UNION BOOKLET**

Beautifully produced by our denomination and widely acclaimed beyond our Church this booklet can provide the basis for a teaching plan when imaginatively applied.

**6 ALL-AGE WORSHIP RESOURCES**

These programmes link adult teaching to that of the younger elements of the church so that the church family is learning together. Scripture Union and others have provided such programmes over long years but it is a strategy to be used thoughtfully and requires considerable work for it to be successful.

**ADDENDUM:**

It goes without saying that a preaching plan can become over restrictive or even dry where slavishly adhered to - flexibility should be built in to the plan particularly when there are last minute arrangements with supply.

Church Leaders would be wise to consider what options best suit the needs of their situation and invite cooperation from those leading worship, particularly where it is a supply arrangement.

**Supporting materials for all the examples quoted are readily available through good Christian Bookshops and can be ordered online (excepting our own Prayer Union Booklet).**

*(It is intended to circulate the above information to congregations along with further details on each of the resources.)*