

## **The Steeple Church, Dundee.**

### **Reflection on The Church of Scotland's Five Marks of Mission.**

#### **Our context:**

The Steeple Church is located at the heart of Dundee's city centre. We are a 'gathered' congregation, with members of the church family living throughout the city and beyond. We embrace folk from many different denominational backgrounds and are regularly joined by students, in particular from overseas. We are a congregation concerned for the spiritual and material welfare of the people of Dundee and with a commitment to those who live, work and spend time in our city centre, and in particular those with material needs and challenges. We extensively developed our buildings some years ago to provide modern and flexible space fit for our worship and outreach ministry and for serving the needs of the local community.

Our parish includes the busy Overgate Shopping Centre, immediately to the north of the church, The University of Abertay campus, the Police Headquarters and the Sheriff Court, the Dundee City Council offices, several hotels and the new V&A Museum of Design. In addition to this commercial, civic and cultural focus there are a significant number of residential apartments occupied by students and others within the parish. We maintain strong relationships with other city centre churches of all denominations.

#### **Our vision**

is to be a worshipping Christian Community at the heart of Dundee that is bible-based, prayerful and alive in Christ, that attracts others to follow Jesus through our caring approach to others around us.

We seek to be a people:

- renewed and prepared for Christian service through spiritual growth in Christ and by training in discipleship and evangelism. **(5MofM 1&2)**
- inspired by God's love, who respond to the many opportunities for service both in the city-centre and beyond. **(5MofM 3)**
- who use our city-centre premises flexibly and creatively in promoting the Gospel of Christ. **(5MofM 1)**
- who have a particular concern for the most vulnerable members of our city centre community. **(5MofM 3&4)**
- who create a safe, welcoming space in our church life for everyone, with no exceptions, irrespective of age, race, nationality, gender, tradition, sexuality, ability, income or health. **(5MofM 1,2,3&4)**
- who are committed to nurturing and supporting families and young people within both our church family and the wider community. **(5MofM 2&4)**
- who serve Jesus Christ through appropriate partnerships with other Christian organisations, other churches and city agencies. **(5MofM 3&4)**
- who learn about and support those working in Christ's name in other parts of the world. **(5MofM 1,3&2)**
- who recognise the importance of being stewards of creation and our responsibility to take care of the earth. **(5MofM 5)**

We strongly align ourselves with the **The National Church's Vision** that  
*"The Church of Scotland seeks to inspire the people of Scotland and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ through enthusiastic worshipping, witnessing, nurturing, and serving communities."*

and that

*"Central to the Church of Scotland is our love and worship of God through following the teachings and examples of Jesus Christ. We express our love for God by our love and practical care for each other and for those we live with and encounter in our daily lives."*

We have found it helpful to consider the 'standard' wording of the Church of Scotland's Five Marks of Mission.....

1. *To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.*
2. *To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.*
3. *To respond to human need by loving service .*
4. *To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.*
5. *To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.*

.....alongside the alternative definition of the Five Marks of Mission created by the Anglican Board of Mission in Australia and endorsed for our use by the Church of Scotland Assembly Trustees:

1. *To witness to Christ's saving, forgiving, reconciling love for all people.*
2. *To build welcoming, transforming communities of faith.*
3. *To stand in solidarity with the poor and needy.*
4. *To challenge violence, injustice and oppression, and work for peace and reconciliation.*
5. *To protect, care for and renew life on our planet.*

Much has changed since March 2019 – for our congregation, as it has for all. We are still slowly emerging from the restrictions of the COVID pandemic, some of which remain in place. We do not yet know the full impact of the pandemic and how different the life and work of our congregation will be in future. During the last 18 months our minister has retired and we are now in a vacancy. Some active members of our church family have moved on and some others have become less engaged in our congregational life during lockdown. We do not yet have a clear picture of what the shape and size of our active congregation will be when restrictions are fully lifted. Bearing in mind this 'state of transition', many of the points below perhaps better describe our pre-covid mission and ministry than the unknown landscape of the future.

## **Our Mission:**

### **1. *To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom / To witness to Christ's saving, forgiving, reconciling love for all people.***

- The main gathering of the whole Church family is at our 10.30am Sunday morning Service. This is informal in style with a good number of people involved in the leadership of the Service. Music is mainly contemporary in style. The sermon is recorded and uploaded onto our website immediately after the Service so that the message can be accessed by folk unable to join us in person. Informal Communion is incorporated into the Service on a monthly basis. Special Services, with more of an 'outreach' focus, are held during the Christmas and Easter seasons. Short evening Services of a more contemplational nature have also been held during Lent and Advent.
- '*Midweek@The Steeple*' offers a weekly lunchtime opportunity for fellowship and teaching including a short Bible reflection. It has been well attended by those who work in the City Centre.
- Prior to COVID, Our *Café Church* met in the Sanctuary on a regular weekday evening, supporting a very mixed community of regular attendees many of whom have had no previous 'church' experience. Discussions, often on a topic introduced by a DVD presentation, provide an opportunity for people to openly discuss, voice opinions and ask questions about Christianity.
- We have run *Alpha Courses* every Autumn for several years. These have been a source of real blessing and encouragement, with relationships built and guests finding and strengthening their faith. Several folk have recently joined the congregation as a result of these courses. In 2019 our Alpha Course was held in a local café rather than the church building.
- The annual *Dundee Nativity Play* is a major collaborative project hosted by The Steeple and involving adults and young people from many of Dundee's churches. It aims, through words and music, to convey the real meaning of the Christmas story in imaginative and engaging ways. The performances attract good audiences, in particular during the Dundee City Council 'Light Night' Event at the end of November when the city centre Christmas Light Display is switched on.

## **2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers. / To build welcoming, transforming communities of faith.**

- We believe in fostering a community where all feel welcomed, included, respected, loved and nurtured and where the unconditional love of Jesus and the unity of all believers is demonstrable. We strive to ensure that our church premises and activities are fully accessible to all.
- As we emerge from the pandemic, our congregation and Kirk Session have recognised the importance of supporting, encouraging and ‘building up one another’ and of finding new ways to strengthen and grow as a Christian community that models and reflects Christ’s love for us. We recognise that as we emerge from the restrictions and search for a ‘new normal’, there will be a vital ongoing need to seek healing, rebuilding of community and strengthening of relationships. This will be a key part of our ministry to one another in coming months and years.
- As a ‘gathered’ congregation, we recognise the need to spend time together in a social environment so that relationships can be built, friendships strengthened and so that those new to our fellowship can feel welcomed and ‘at home’. Extended post-service coffee times and regular buffet lunches on Sundays are central to this. During the Summer months, the *Steeple Out & About* programme is organised to offer organised outdoor activities including walks, cycle rides, barbecues and football or rounders matches, usually followed by a visit to a café. Two annual outings are organised for the older members of the congregation, popular venues being to Dobbies Garden Centre and Abernhyte Antique Centre. Every second Saturday during the Winter months, snow permitting, the *Steeple Skiers* head to Glenshee. Ski equipment can be borrowed, especially by those wishing to try skiing for the first time. The *Steeple Craft Group* meet together regularly and make cards and other produce, which are then sold to help raise funds for congregational and other causes. *Steeple Men* is a group of mainly retired men who meet weekly to play pool and to chat. They include a few from out with the congregation. Steeple Ceilidhs are great crowd-pullers, and our Sanctuary space is proving to be the perfect venue for such parties.
- Many members of the congregation meet together regularly in midweek *Home Groups* for fellowship, prayer and Bible study.
- There are regular opportunities for the congregation to pray together. Prior to the pandemic, a regular monthly Sunday evening Prayer gathering was held. During the pandemic this moved to a weekly Zoom prayer meeting, which continues in this form. In addition, many folk use our very active ‘Steeple Support’ WhatsApp Group to share and respond to both prayer needs and practical requests for help. In recent years we have held Days of Prayer where

folk have been encouraged to spend some time in the church praying for the congregation's various areas of ministry.

- Up until 2018, a good number of young families were part of our congregation and we held Sunday morning 'Kids Church' Groups, a highly successful monthly Sunday afternoon *Messy Church* and, a regular YF group to support teenagers from our own and other local churches. In recent times this aspect of our church life has not flourished. We pray for a revival of this work and hope that, perhaps as a collaborative project within our new Churches' Grouping, *Messy Church* and support for teens might flourish again in future.
- Several of our members are actively involved in *Friends International – Dundee*, a group of people from local churches based in the Dundee area who welcome International students and research workers living in or near the City of Dundee in Scotland.

### **3. To respond to human need by loving service / To stand in solidarity with the poor and needy.**

- We acknowledge that we have a calling to serve both in Dundee city centre and, as a 'gathered congregation', in the other locations where we live and work.
- Our *Parish Nursing Project* is staffed by two Registered and trained Parish Nurses supported by a small army of volunteers. It seeks to provide whole-person health and social care particularly to those who struggle with homelessness and addiction issues. This includes the provision of hot meals on a weekly basis. The Nurses work very closely with the NHS and many other statutory and voluntary agencies. During the COVID restrictions our team worked in collaboration with another local Christian charity, Eagles Wings Trust, to help meet the ongoing needs of our 'guests'. When restrictions were eased in autumn 2020 and Spring 2021, they used the Sanctuary space rather than one of the halls that they had been using, to allow appropriate social distancing. This important work continues to grow and develop.
- *Hot Chocolate Trust* started as the church's Youth Work project and is now an independent Trust, working full-time with, often marginalised, teenagers who congregate in the environs of the church. The Steeple remains strongly associated with the Project, through prayer and volunteer work, with representation on the Board of Trustees and with the provision of a home for the project in the 'Mary Slessor Centre' half of our church complex.  
[ <https://www.hotchocolate.org.uk/index.html> ]
- Up until lockdown we regularly opened our doors and welcomed visitors to our twice weekly '*Open Church*' afternoons. Many folk came past, some to simply 'see what was happening' and others actively seeking support or prayer. Good

relationships were formed with a number of regular visitors, some battling loneliness and other needs. These afternoons and other activities were facilitated by an employed 'Community Outreach Worker', funded by the Church of Scotland 'Go For It' Fund and other local Trusts. Unfortunately, because of the restrictions imposed during 2020, this post is not currently continuing, though we hope that a similar appointment will be able to be made in future.

- We have productive working arrangements with the Management of The Overgate Shopping Centre, The City Council and The DD One (private sector partnership) Group and the Faith In Community Dundee organisation.
- The Steeple is a collection point for the *Dundee Foodbank Project*, which distributes much needed emergency food supplies to people in crisis across the city.
- In recent years, the Steeple has hosted an annual service, on World AIDS Day, to support those who have lost loved ones due to drug use or addiction.
- In recent years we have actively supported individuals and organisations working in Pakistan, Romania, Nepal, Rwanda, Malawi and Uganda. In addition, we have longstanding links with Tearfund, Vine Trust, Embrace The Middle East and the Presbytery of Calibar, Nigeria

#### **4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation / To challenge violence, injustice and oppression, and work for peace and reconciliation**

- In recent years we have held ad hoc Prayer Vigils focusing on specific issues, for example areas of conflict across the world and the plight of refugees.
- We take the individual and collective challenges posed by the recent BLM and slavery debates very seriously. A series of open Zoom meetings were held during 2020 to explore these issues together.
- We collaborate with many other statutory and third sector agencies and members of other Dundee churches in our *Connections Café*, which aims to offer friendship and support to those who have moved to Dundee from other parts of the world, in particular those who are refugees, to support language learning for those who seek this and to encourage and facilitate cross-cultural and inter-faith understanding. Before the COVID restrictions the 'Café' opened every Monday morning. During the pandemic these meetings have continued by Zoom. Funding has been obtained from Scottish Refugee Council and other Trusts to expand the range of support that can be offered. Currently we are undertaking an assessment exercise to discern how best this ministry should develop.

The congregation has recently become a part of Mahabba [<https://www.mahabbanetwork.com/>], a relational Network giving people of Muslim heritage the opportunity to find and follow Jesus. The Network's vision is to see ministry among people of Muslim heritage as a normal part of church life and this ethos supports our belief that missional evangelism goes hand in hand with fostering good relationships with incoming and established Muslim families and groups, which is at the heart of the work of our Connections Café.

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**5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth / To protect, care for and renew life on our planet.**

- We are aware that we are called to be active stewards of God's creation, with an individual and collective responsibility to take care of our planet. We recognise the importance of responding to climate change and environmental issues with clarity and togetherness, being led by the Spirit through prayer, worship and consultation. Our Eco-Group leads the congregation in furthering an understanding of and commitment to addressing the risks to God's creation as a result of environmental issues and advising the Kirk Session on measures that will ensure our Church operates in an environmentally responsible manner.
- we have recently joined Eco-Congregation Scotland [<https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/>], a movement of Scottish church congregations, of all denominations and none, committed to addressing environmental issues through their life and mission.
- In support of the forthcoming COP 26 Conference, the Steeple Church has recently formally *declared a climate emergency* and will follow on from this with a programme of support for our congregation, as we seek to take practical measures to help the crisis.