



Bon Accord Strategy

Introduction

Why a strategy?

Every organisation – including a local congregation like Bon Accord – needs a strategy that outlines its objectives and provides direction as to how those objectives are to be met. Often a strategy will be unwritten and a general consensus will prevail among the leadership and congregation as to what the objectives are and how they are to be achieved. This can work but there is always the danger that, in the absence of a clearly stated and owned strategy, a congregation may simply drift along doing what it does. It may (or may not) do what it does well but there is little sense of purpose or direction. It is also true that a congregation can have a strategy that finds expression in a document that is – to all intents and purposes – ignored or only paid lip service to.

Why now?

We can identify two providential prompts that explain why, as a Kirk Session, we felt the need to establish and be directed by a congregational strategy.

The first prompt was the report of the Presbytery visitation team (visit in June 2015). The presbytery team detected ‘...*a feeling among many that the church was going through the motions*’... and ‘...*there was little evidence of meaningful interaction (on the part of the leadership) with the congregation on matters of vision and strategy*’. As a result the team recommended to the Kirk Session that attention be given to ‘...*consider a strategy for how best to fulfil the Gospel Commission as a 21st Century, City centre church*’.

The second prompt was and is the major refurbishment of our building that will, in due course, provide us with a building brimming with potential for outreach and service.

God is giving us an opportunity for a fresh start but opportunities can be grasped or spurned. The strategy that we are presenting is intended to help us grasp the opportunity to begin afresh with clarity of purpose and direction.

What guides our strategy?

The foundational elements of our strategy are the **objectives** that we, as a Kirk Session, have identified for Bon Accord. They are as follows:

Preach and teach the whole counsel of God to God’s people that we might grow in knowledge, maturity and holiness.

Make known the message of salvation in the power of the Holy Spirit to those who have not yet heard or responded to the good news. This task is the duty and privilege of every believer.

Cultivate a worshipping Christian community grounded in the Word, sacrament, and prayer that reflects the diversity of our city where all, independently of their cultural, ethnic, social or economic condition, are and feel members of the Christian family, valued and useful.

Strengthen the Christian family with the purpose that our children be raised in love and instructed as children of the covenant and heirs of the promises and responsibilities that derive from the same.

Demonstrate the love of Jesus in word and deed to those who suffer both within and outwith the family of faith.

Be a missionary church in Aberdeen, the North East, and the world.

Be a prophetic voice in our society persuaded that there is no issue on which the Word of God does not give instruction or where the principles derived from the Word do not direct us in forming Biblical opinions and proposals.

What is the process we have followed?

These are the steps followed or being followed in the whole process:

Consultation – This step, conducted in the course of 2016, involved inviting the majority of ministries in the congregation¹ to fill in a Ministry Review Form that identified strengths, weaknesses, needs and opportunities. This was followed, in the majority of cases, by a face to face conversation with one or two members of the Strategy Team² to ensure there was a clear understanding of what had been written. Those members of the Strategy Team then communicated their findings and conclusions to the team in full for review.

Review & proposal - The Strategy Team reviewed each Ministry Review Form and identified actions to be pursued in one of three ways;

- Encouragement of ministry to proceed.
- Pass on the action for consideration / approval / action by the Kirk Session or Deacons Court as appropriate.
- Incorporate the action into the strategy document.

Agreement – The Strategy Proposal (the original draft of this document) was presented to the Kirk Session in June 2017 for consideration, modification, and approval.

Communication – The representatives of each ministry have received the relevant feedback of decisions taken with regard to their ministry. The Strategy Document is shared with the congregation with a view to better understanding and ownership of all that is being proposed.

¹ See Appendix 1

² The Strategy Team was made up of the following members: David MacPherson, Cassia Martin, Steven Inglis, Gordon Macleod, Norman Laing, and Isobel Morison.

Implementation – While some of the strategy proposals have already been or are being implemented most will begin to be implemented as of now and into 2018 and beyond.

Oversight – The Kirk Session has appointed a Strategy Oversight Team to ensure what has been agreed is implemented in the timescale envisaged and to help in whatever way is needed to ensure efficient implementation. In addition the Strategy Oversight team is available to provide help as required to the ministries as they proceed to implement the agreed actions. The Kirk Session has further agreed that the strategy review process be incorporated into the ongoing life of the congregation with ministry reviews being undertaken every 3 years.

What did we discover in reviewing the life and ministry of the congregation?

Though it might appear self-evident we do want to make a simple yet important point; we are richly blessed by God. As a congregation we are blessed with a diversity of committed and gifted people, effective ministry in many areas, and significant financial and material resources (not least our newly refurbished building).

While it is also perhaps self-evident it is worth explicitly acknowledging that we have strengths and weaknesses. As we reviewed how we matched up to our stated objectives it was clear that we are relatively strong (though with room for improvement) on preaching & teaching and youth ministry (in its various forms) but weak on evangelism & mission, in addition we lack any meaningful prophetic voice in and to our society.

What are some of the features of the strategy?

The strategy is marked by the following key features:

It is **enabling** – Our goal is to do what we currently do better and begin to do what is at present largely undone (e.g. mission / evangelism).

It is **realistic** – What is proposed is intended to be ‘doable’. This does mean that some of the proposals may seem modest and preliminary but this is preferable to grand schemes that appear beyond our capacity to implement.

It is **sustainable** – What is proposed is designed to be sustainable in the medium / long term.

It is **focused** – The proposal focuses on our core objectives (this did involve leaving unconsidered proposals that, though perfectly worthy in themselves, fell out with our core objectives).

It is **positive** – We are persuaded that the implementation of the strategy proposals will contribute to qualitative and quantitative growth in the congregation.

It is important to stress that the strategy does not include an exhaustive description of what is already being done but focuses on the following key areas that emerged as most significant in the process; **Corporate Prayer, Corporate Worship, Pastoral Care, Training / Christian Education, Mission, Youth, and Personnel.**

The strategy, for example, makes no explicit reference to Sunday School (though it is considered in the context of training). The reason for this is that Sunday School is running well and does not require immediate or urgent attention.

Corporate Prayer

Current status: At present the gatherings for corporate prayer³ are our midweek meetings (fortnightly Neighbourhood Fellowships and Prayer Meeting) and the Sunday evening prayer time (currently suspended). The extent to which there is an opportunity for corporate prayer at the Neighbourhood Fellowships varies from fellowship to fellowship. The fortnightly Prayer Meeting has an average attendance of about 20-25 (c. 1 in 6 of the membership of the congregation). The attendance at the Sunday evening prayer time (until its suspension) was ordinarily in single figures. We are persuaded that given the importance of prayer (and our dependence on God that such prayer evidences) any strategy must contemplate taking measures to stimulate praying together as God's people.

Objectives:

Increase the enthusiasm for and participation in corporate prayer.

Ensure that prayer is offered to God in a systematic and regular way for the congregation, its ministries, and the wider mission of the church.

Actions:

The Kirk Session to conduct a consultation / review of corporate prayer within the congregation with a view to securing the stated objectives.

Timescale:

1Q 2018

³ We acknowledge that there are other opportunities available and utilized for prayer within the life of the congregation but we are limiting ourselves to those that are open to any and all in the congregation ('corporate' in that sense of open to the whole 'corpus' or body of the congregation).

Corporate Worship

Current status: Corporate Worship is conducted at the morning and evening service every Sunday. The primary purpose of our corporate worship is to gather believers for the worship of God allowing us to praise, pray, and be instructed, equipped, and enthused for service.

A secondary, though also very important, purpose is to provide opportunity for unbelievers to participate in our worship services and so hear the gospel message and witness gospel life.

We have identified the need to make our worship services more accessible while maintaining our commitment to Biblical worship.

Objectives:

Ensure that the services at Bon Accord are accessible to all and welcoming to outsiders (visitors from other church traditions and those who make no Christian profession).

Ensure that the worship services are conducted in such a manner that Christians are encouraged to invite friends and others to join with us at our services.

Actions:

Timescale:

Create a *'Welcome Team'*

2Q 2018

Produce a *'Welcome Pack'*

2Q 2018

The minister, in consultation with the Kirk Session, to review the manner in which public worship is conducted to ensure the above objectives are being met.

2Q 2018

Pastoral Care

Current status: The primary formal vehicle whereby pastoral care is given / received is through the Neighbourhood Fellowships led by office-bearers. Care is also provided by the minister, the Pastoral Worker, and the Youth Worker.

There are secondary vehicles where pastoral care is also exercised; for example the Ladies Bible Study, Guys / Girls Bible Study, and the Senior Citizens Fellowship. In addition care is given / received in an informal way and setting in the context of Christian friendship, fellowship, and hospitality.

The current situation, centred on Neighbourhood Fellowships, falls short as it fails to provide in a comprehensive way the opportunity for care to be given and received across the congregation.

Objectives:

That everybody in regular attendance at or connected with the congregation be attached to a Neighbourhood Fellowship.

The leadership of each Neighbourhood Fellowship have a clear understanding of and commitment to their pastoral responsibilities (exercised in respect of and in conjunction with those attached to their Neighbourhood Fellowship).

Actions:

Timescale:

Establish a system that ensures the coherent overall organization of the Neighbourhood Fellowships (administration of lists, directing new people to a Neighbourhood Fellowship, role of 'Welcome Team').

1Q 2018

Define and promote the pastoral role of the Neighbourhood Fellowships with a clear pathway for referral of pastoral concerns as required.

1Q 2018

Ensure each Neighbourhood Fellowship is suitably led (ideally by an elder / deacon team).

Ongoing

Training / Christian Education (adults)

Current status: The principal avenues for Christian Education for adults in Bon Accord are the Sunday services and Neighbourhood Fellowships.

In addition there are other initiatives such as Adult Sunday School, and periodic midweek courses on apologetics, family, and gospel life.

The review concluded that there is a need for a more organised and intentional programme of Christian education within the life of the congregation.

There is also a clearly identified need to provide task specific training for different ministry roles (for example Sunday School teaching and leading Bible Studies).

Objectives:

Suitable training will be provided for those engaged in ministry / service in the congregation.

Suitable training will be provided to promote growth in the Christian life (doctrine / character / apologetics / family etc.).

Actions:

The Kirk Session to establish a training and education team tasked with identifying needs and opportunities and sourcing, organizing, providing training and education as required.

Timescale:

1Q 2018 (and ongoing)

Mission / evangelism

Current status:

Local mission: The congregation currently engages with and seeks to reach the local community by means of a parents and toddlers group (Little Lambs), the Food Bank, and the provision of occasional evangelistic courses (Christianity Explored).

International mission: The congregation is involved in international mission by means of congregational connection with mission workers.

The congregation supports Free Church mission (home and international) through its financial contributions to the denomination.

The congregation also supports international mission efforts financially via occasional fundraising initiatives (for example the annual WFM project) and modest contributions made from congregational funds.

The congregation prays for mission workers / initiatives at public worship and privately (distribution of Free Church missionary prayer notes).

The review concluded that mission is our greatest weakness as a congregation. On the local front our efforts are modest in scale and of limited effectiveness in reaching others with the good news (though this should not be understood as a criticism of those involved in the initiatives mentioned above). On the international front the congregation lacks a sufficiently thought out strategy and practice for engaging in and supporting international mission.

Objectives:

Engage and enthuse our people in mission and provide opportunities for mission (locally and internationally).

Actions:

Timescale:

The Kirk Session to establish a '*Mission Work Group*' tasked with **communicating** what is currently happening and **identifying** new opportunities for mission run by Bon Accord or in partnership with others (including consideration of suggestions made by ministries in the review forms).

1Q 2018 (and ongoing)

The Kirk Session to explore opportunities for establishing a church plant in or around Aberdeen.

2018 - 2020

Establish an annual budgeted plan for the financial support of home and international mission.

4Q 2017

Youth

Current status: The review team concluded that one of the strengths of the congregation is the work done amongst and for our children and teenagers (Creche, Sunday School, teens ministry, Legacy, holiday club etc.).

The work that is done amongst and for our older young people (students and young workers) is also significant and we have been blessed over the years by gifted and committed youth workers. That said it is in this area that the review team identified the greatest need for attention and this is reflected in the objectives / actions below.

Objectives:

That Bon Accord would have a youth ministry that is effective, sustainable, attractive, and organised and focussed on both the discipleship of our own young people and outreach to other young people.

Actions:

Establish a '*Youth Team*' comprising a Kirk Session appointed convenor, the youth elder, the congregational youth worker, and three young people (students / young workers).

The '*Youth Team*' to be responsible for establishing the direction and objectives of the ministry and organising the annual programme of activities.

Timescale:

3Q 2017 (and ongoing)

Personnel

Current status: The congregation is currently served by a minister (full time), a youth worker (full time), and a pastoral worker (part time) and by elders and deacons who serve in their respective capacities as time and opportunity allows. In addition the congregation is served by volunteers in a multiplicity of ways and activities.

The review team concluded (on the basis of feedback from a number of ministries) that one area of urgent need is formal administrative support within the congregation (to support the staff and volunteers). One result of the absence of administrative support is the under-use of channels of communication within the congregation (print media, social media, website etc.).

Objectives:

The congregation be served by an appropriate number of office bearers as required to fulfil our stated objectives and carry out the ongoing tasks and new actions outlined in our strategy.

The congregation be adequately staffed.

The work / ministry of the congregation be conducted in an organized and efficient manner.

The gifts of all those in the congregation be better known and utilised.

Actions:

Timescale:

Elect / ordain new elders / deacons

4Q 2017

Recruit a part-time administrator.

4Q 2017

Explore creative and affordable ways of securing additional staff as required.

2018

Produce a '*Recruitment of volunteers*' policy for the congregation.

2Q 2018

Aberdeen, November 2017

Appendix 1

Bon Accord Strategy – List of ministries included in strategy review

Name ministry / activity	Notes	Point contact for review
Kirk Session	This was divided in four areas; corporate worship, pastoral care, corporate prayer, and systems and processes. There is a Ministry Review Cover Sheet for each area.	Members of Kirk Session
Deacons' Court		Clerk of Deacons' Court
Praise Team		John MacPherson
Christian Education		David MacPherson & Cassia Martin
Neighbourhood Fellowships	There is one Ministry Review Cover Sheet incorporating all responses from NF leaders.	NF leaders
Creche		Linda Stephen
Sunday School		Judy Laing & Anne MacDonald
Little Lambs		Rachel Stewart
Youth Ministry	Review forms were filled in by the Youth Committee and Youth Worker / responsible elder. There is one Ministry Review Cover Sheet incorporating both responses.	Youth Committee Cassia Martin & Donald Smith
Senior Citizens		Martha MacPherson
Teens Ministry	Review forms were filled in for Bible Class, Teens Fellowship, and Teens Group. There are Ministry Review Cover Sheets for each of these areas of teens ministry.	Gavin Graham Anne MacDonald Catriona Macleod
Food Bank		Gordon Ferguson
Ladies Bible Study		Anne Smith & Anne MacDonald
Ladies Book Group		Wilma Nicolson & Cassia Martin
Ladies Support Group		Anne Smith & Wilma Nicolson
Youth Worker		Cassia Martin
Minister		David MacPherson

