



SURE FOUNDATIONS

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The Guild Strategy and Themes for 2024- 2027

When you glance at the topic for the next strategy, it might look like a continuation of the discussions which have been held recently, but take heart - now we move to clearly defined and purposed-filled concepts in the new strategy 'Let us build a house'.

Over the next three years we will be adopting the following themes:

2024 - Sure foundations

2025 - Living stones

2026 - Beyond the walls.

Have you ever looked at a house or an estate being built? It looks very complex, setting the foundations, connecting each house to the grid, sewage system and water supplies etc. while all the time, conforming to planning regulations and environmental laws.

There are similarities as we look at our 'building', not a house, but a 'household of faith'. This is explained in Ephesians 2: 19-22: "So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together we are His house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Jesus Christ Himself." (New Living Translation).

Traditionally the cornerstone is the first stone laid for a structure. It is the reference point for all the others. It determines the entire construction, giving stability so that no matter the variables of weather or sudden events the house will still stand. We have no better reference point than Jesus, showing us not only how to live but how to maintain connected with God and with each other.

Any good building should have common features such as:

Durability. It should be robust.

Functionality. It should provide a purpose for the lifestyle of the residents.

Beauty. It should be life enhancing.

What good recommendations these are for the Christian faith!

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SURE FOUNDATIONS

There are so many good people who have lived long lives which are testament to proving "it works".

There is always guidance and help in the Scriptures to keep us on the right path.

The household of faith should be a life-giving and positive community so that people are challenged by the bond which binds Christians together in love. This is clearly expressed by Jesus' words in John 13:35 "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
(New International Version).

Any building site is a hazardous place requiring health and safety measures. As the work progresses risks must be assessed and addressed. In the Christian arena it is the same, just as the Apostle Paul experienced on his missionary journeys in Europe. Later writing to the church in Ephesus he said, "Above all taking the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit".

Of course, a house is not a home. No matter the elegance or style, bricks and mortar cannot provide a home where love, acceptance and support are given. Sometimes relationships need repaired, and goals re-evaluated, all within the embrace of love.

This concept is clearly explained in the words of a song by the Christian American songwriter and musician, Don Francisco "Give your heart a home". The lyrics of the chorus are: "If you're tired and weary, weak and heavy laden, I can understand how it feels to be alone. I will take your burden, if you'll let Me love you, wrap my arms around you, give your heart a home."

This is not a new concept. It was encapsulated centuries ago by St Augustine of Hippo who wrote, "You have made us for yourself O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You".

As we plan for the next three years may we be visionary and faith-filled as we set foundations, remain alive to the call of God and cement our relationships with each other, always aware that "unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain that build it".

Once a house is built it is exciting to take possession, develop a garden, and get to know the neighbours. Let us remain excited and expansive as we broaden our horizons and move into new territory.

It was the sport psychologist Denis Waitley who said, "Expect the best, plan for the worst, expect to be surprised!"

God is the God of the unexpected and He always surprises. Be prepared - it's over to you to accept the challenge.

Rae Lind

National Convener

BIBLE READINGS

What does the Bible tell us about 'Foundations'?

In the Old Testament

Isaiah 28: 16

Isaiah 58: 12

Zechariah 4: 9

In the New Testament

Matthew 7: 24-27 and Luke 6: 46-49

1 Peter 2: 4 -12

1 Corinthians 3:11

Readings from different translations

Isaiah 28: 16-17

NIV: So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place.

Matthew 7: 24-27

The Message: "These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock.

"But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards."

1 Corinthians 3: 10-11

KJV: According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Look at www.biblehub.com for more translations?

SUGGESTED HYMNS

	CH4	MP
Safe in the shadows	55	
O God, you search me and you know me	97	
Source and Sovereign, Rock and Cloud	133	
All my hope on God is founded	192	16
Let us build a house where love can dwell	198	
Christ is made the sure foundation	200	73
Every new morning	213	
Be thou my vision	465	51
Your hand, O God, had guided	511	705
We are marching in the light of God	516	
The Church is wherever God's people are praising	522	
Lord, speak to me, that I may speak	542	444
As the deer pants	550	37
There is a Redeemer	559	673
For everyone born a place at the table	685	
Will your anchor hold	737	770
The Church's one foundation	739	
Bind us together, Lord		54
My hope is built on nothing less		473
The Lord's my shepherd (I will trust)		1008
In Christ alone		1072

Why not look at www.hymnary.org for other hymns?

PRAYERS

Calls to worship

Psalm 33: vs 2 – 4

Praise the Lord with the harp, make music to him on the ten stringed lyre.
Sing to him a new song, play skilfully and shout for joy.
For the word of the Lord is right and true.

Or as in the Message:

Play his praise on a grand piano! Compose your own new song to him; give him trumpet fanfare.
For the Lord's word is solid to the core; everything he makes is sound inside and out.

1 Corinthians 3: vs 16 - 17

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you. If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

Or as in the Message:

You realize, don't you, that you are the temple of God, and God himself is present in you? No-one will get by with vandalizing God's temple, you can be sure of that. God's temple is sacred – and you, remember, are the temple.

Isaiah 28: 16 - 17a

So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line..."

1 Corinthians 3: 9 – 11

For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

This place is our spiritual home.
Here we meet God and here we learn how to live.
Here we find comfort and security.
Let's worship God together.

Let us worship together, offering all that we have and all that we are.
Let us open our hearts and minds and focus on God alone – our Maker and Redeemer.

Be still and know that God is with us. Let us worship him through his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, the keystone of our lives and the focus of our praise.

Opening prayers

Psalm 33: vs 2 – 4

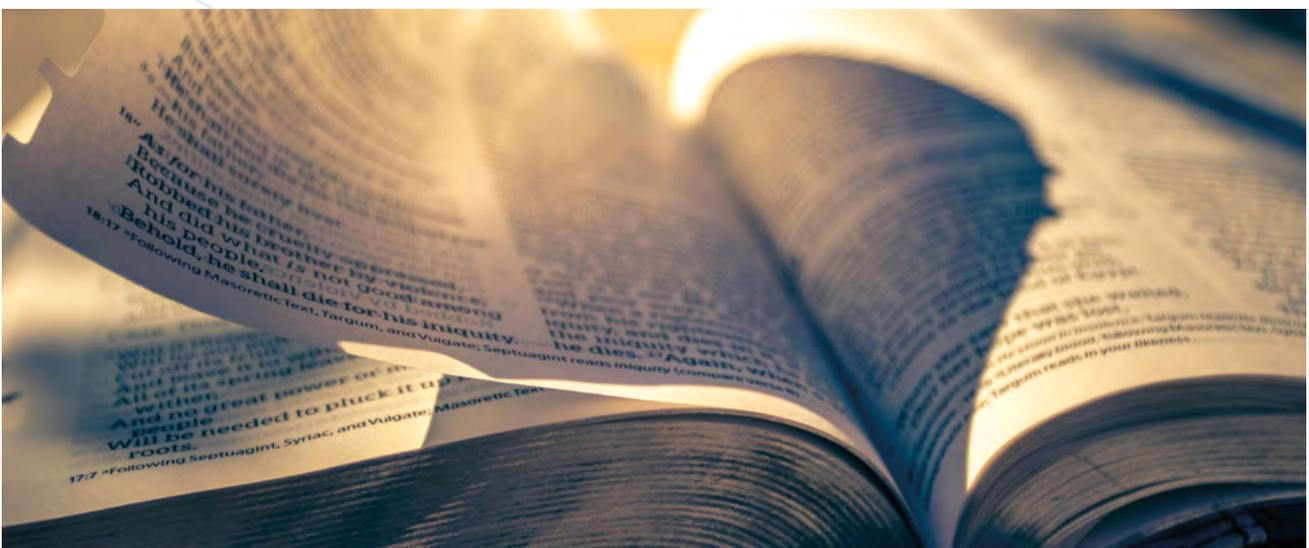
Our Father, thank you that we can gather together as a Guild this afternoon/evening. May we show our love for you and for each other throughout this time we spend together. Help us to express our love for you through all our worship, prayer, action and fellowship. Show us how we may share your love with others.

We ask this in Jesus name, whose we are and whom we serve. Amen

Dear Lord, help us to build our future on a strong foundation, just like the house built on rock not sand. Whatever we do, may we do it willingly with trust and love for one another. In the end this will make any task much more achievable. Believe in God and he will help and guide us going forward with all our plans. Amen

Loving God, we give thanks for the Guild and the part it has played in the life of Church of Scotland over many years. We think of all the members who have given of their time and talents and especially in more recent times through our Guild Projects. We are involved with all the changes within the church at this present time and so we must 'Build a House' with strong foundations for our future. The Guild has always had a strong foundation of faith and service which has never faltered. May we go forward as Guild members trusting in you and encouraging one another, by showing all that the Guild stands for now and back when Dr Charteris began our wonderful organisation. Whose we are and whom we serve. Amen

Heavenly Father, in today's troubled world we all seek a sure foundation and are grateful to know that you are the solid rock from which we can draw strength and resolve. You are the architect of our world and have built a world which we can enjoy in all its beauty and glory. We would ask that you use your hands to guide and encourage us to carry forward your work and stand firm in the knowledge that Your love is for all. Amen



PRAYERS

Prayers for others

Loving heavenly Father, we thank you for all that we have and ask your blessing on those who do not have enough. We remember those who suffer from illness or bereavement. Surround them with your healing love. Help us to support those who do not have enough money to feed their family or keep a roof over their head and give them the strength to face each new day with courage, knowing you are with them. Give hope to those who have concerns about their family and friends. Help us to show them that they are not alone; that many people are praying for them. This we ask in your name. Amen

Father, as we look to you, our sure foundation, we thank you for all the blessings you have bestowed upon us. We pray for all those who have sustained us throughout our faith journey and supported us as we stepped out in faith to serve you in our communities. Lord, guide and encourage all those who have been called to serve you, our Parish Ministers, OLMs, youth and development workers. Loving God, bless all the many volunteers in our congregations who serve you in their small corner. In all that we do, may your name be praised. Amen

Almighty and ever living God, your greatness inspires us to bring to you our concerns for others knowing all power is in your hands. Many are wearied with the burdens of care and responsibility; we pray that in the stillness of your presence they may find renewed strength to face each day. Many carry fears which are sometimes spoken but are often held in silence; may your Spirit calm anxious minds, bringing comfort and grace. Many are scattered throughout the world suffering from natural disasters, war, and persecution; may the power of the risen Lord give hope and courage. Amen

Almighty God, as we thank you for your abundant blessings and for your never-ending presence in our lives, we know that there are many in this world who struggle daily to overcome difficulties and challenges and we bring them before you today.



Father of healing and comfort, we pray for the sick and injured, for those who are grieving, for those who are battling mental health issues, for those who are struggling with addiction and we ask for shelter for those who are homeless.

Father of peace and hope, we bring before you all victims of war, conflict and violence, and those living with the after effects of extreme trauma.

Father of compassion and justice, we pray for the people of the world who are caught up in ever increasing natural disasters, as our planet, your wonderful creation, reels from the effects of global warming. Grant world leaders and governments the foresight and wisdom to ensure there is fair treatment and resources to sustain everyone in their care.

We ask all of this in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour, whose we are and whom we serve. Amen

Most merciful Father, we admit we have done little to further Your Kingdom or to advance Your Glory. Forgive us our short comings and give us the strength and desire to serve You and You alone. Give us a greater heart to help those less fortunate than ourselves. Help us to spread the truth of Your word given so freely to us. May we move mountains in your service to our fellow man. We pray especially for those for whom You have yet to become a reality, for those never moved by You taking up the cross on our behalf, for those who do not understand the great sacrifice, for those for whom 'Christ' is a swear-word. For all these, and for all who do not pray for themselves, accept our intercessions, through Jesus our Lord. Amen

Offertory prayers

Eternal God, creator and life-giver, source of all that is and is to be; you fashion us in your image, and plant within our hearts the joy of giving. You provide us with blessings in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, we may share abundantly with those in need. All good things come from you and, in our giving, we allow more good to come. Bless these gifts we offer now, in your name. Amen.

Loving Lord, all that we are and all that we have are gifts from you, so we give you thanks for your continued goodness to us as the Guild. In dedicating this offering, we ask for a blessing on the hands of those who have given, as well as the hands of those who will receive and as always, Father, bless us in your service. Amen

Jesus, our Guide and Cornerstone, bless what we offer in your name: use these our gifts, gracious Lord, to build up your Church and allow more people to hear of your healing, your compassion and your justice. And with them we dedicate ourselves to serve you faithfully as we continue our journey through life, remembering always whose we are and whom we serve. Amen

PRAYERS

Closing prayers

Heavenly Father, we thank you for being with us this day. May you continue to be with us as we part. We thank you for our time shared in Your word, helping us to have rooted foundations. Lead us and guide us until we meet again. Amen

Dear Lord, let us be sure of our foundations. As we close our meeting let us all remember the building of our faith and the information from our (speaker or leader). We thank them for what we have learned. We thank you for the fellowship we have had as we came together to share our time. May the love of God follow us from today until we meet again. Amen

Heavenly Father, our thoughts at this meeting have been on this session's theme, Sure Foundations. From childhood reminiscences of sandcastles washed away by the sea and on through Bible stories, we have learned that there are many different types of foundations. There is much to reflect on from the thought-provoking message from our speaker today / tonight. Father, by our words and actions and with your guidance, may we play our small part in enabling others to know the love of Jesus, the surest foundation of all. Lord, as our meeting draws to a close, we give thanks for your presence with us and for the friendship and fellowship we enjoy in the Guild. As we travel home remain with us and all whom we love now and always. Amen

Heavenly Father, as we come to the end of our meeting, we thank you for the fellowship we have enjoyed; for feeling your presence here in moments of silence, in moments of listening, of singing in praise to you. You are the rock on which we stand, You are our Father in good times and bad times. We pray for our family and friend as we go home. We pray for our Guild friends until we meet again. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Benedictions

Lord, bless us in our going out, in our listening and speaking, in our seeing and reacting, in our giving and receiving, in our welcoming and leave taking that your love be shown, and your name honoured. Amen

Father, as we go from this time of fellowship into the days ahead, ready us to meet life's challenges standing firm on your promises and assured you walk with us. Amen

Bless us all here today and the homes from which we come, grant that we have not only enjoyed the worship and fellowship of this meeting, but that we may be stimulated to examine our faith afresh and inspired to translate it into challenging forms of action. Amen

At the close of another meeting, you Lord, the master builder, have through our worship built us up in faith and opened our eyes to expand and experience our world. With every sense of that faith, send us out, building on the foundations of your love. Amen

Lord we pray for a blessing on all gathered here and on the homes to which we return - may your peace and love dwell on our hearts.

SAMPLE WORSHIP 1

LET US BUILD A HOUSE

Hymn

For I'm building a people of power (MP 151)

Prayer

Loving God, we thank you for all that you have provided for us, our families, our homes and our friends. We pray that we can love them, as you love us. We know we sometimes take them and you for granted, and we will try harder to remedy that, every day. Father, please look after the homeless and destitute in this world of ours and give us the strength to help them also. We pray for all children and teachers in our schools, that they are happy and learn to love and appreciate everything around them. We pray for the leaders of our countries. Give them compassion and help them make wise decisions, to make the world a fairer place for everyone in it. Amen

Reading

1 Corinthians 3: 8-17

Reflection

Paul is telling us that Christ is the only one that can do anything with our lives and we need to put our trust in him. This is not an easy time for the Guild, but that should not faze us. Things may be more challenging, but when have we ever shied away from a challenge? Let us be positive and think of all the new things we can accomplish with our love and determination. Let us go out and share ideas with each other. "Great minds, discuss ideas; Average minds discuss events; Small minds discuss people"

Hymn

Let us build a house where love can dwell (CH4 198)

SAMPLE WORSHIP 2

Hymn

Christ is made the sure foundation CH4 200/MP 73

Readings

Hebrews 1: 1-13 "God's final word: his Son"

Reflection

For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'? (Psalm 2 v 7) Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son' (2 Samuel 7 v 14; 1 Chron 17 v 13) And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.' (Deuteronomy 32 v 43) In speaking of the angels he says, 'He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire.' (Psalm 104 v 4) But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a sceptre of justice will be the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.' (Psalm 45 v 6 -7) He also says, 'In the beginning, LORD, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end. (Psalm 102 v 25 - 27) To which of the angels did God ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'? (Psalm 110:1) Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

In this world of continuing change, it can be difficult to keep our Saviour close. We can however rely on Him, and Him alone to help us make necessary change in the knowledge that the foundations he has put in place before we ever were born, for our contented life here on earth to be more fulfilling. We can help in our own small way to keep building His house here on earth for other people to see His Spirit in us, thus helping bringing them to meet our Saviour for themselves.

Prayer

Lord we give you thanks for being a sure foundation for us, especially in this ever-changing world. We praise you that we can always rely on your faithfulness in our weakness. We ask that you be with each of us here today, lead us and guide us to serve only You. Be with all those who are suffering in anyway, encourage us Father to keep them in our prayers constantly. Honour us with your presence with us we serve you. Forgive us all our sins. Amen

Closing Hymn

In Christ Alone MP 1072

SAMPLE WORSHIP 3

Hymn

All creatures of our God and King CH4 147/MP 7

Reading

Revelation 21: 4 – 19

Opening Prayer

Lord of strength and power, we come before you knowing that you surround us with love. We thank you for the ways in which you have revealed yourself to us. We thank you for the love that you have shown us. Lord there are times when we all feel unsettled and unsure, when the world around us as seems so overwhelming. Help us to know in all things you are our foundation, the rock on which you build us up and equip as to be the people you want us to be.

Bless as we join together and encourage us to trust you in all things. Amen

Reflection

The wall is for security. Heaven is a safe state; those who are there, are separated and secured from all evils and enemies. This city is vast; here is room for all the people of God. The foundation of the wall; the promise and power of God, and the purchase of Christ, are the strong foundations of the safety and happiness of the church. These foundations are set forth by twelve sorts of precious stones, denoting the variety and excellence of the doctrines of the gospel, or of the graces of the Holy Spirit, or the personal excellences of the Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven has gates; there is a free admission to all that are sanctified; they shall not find themselves shut out. These gates were all of pearls. Christ is the Pearl of great price, and he is our Way to God. The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. The saints in heaven tread gold under foot. The saints are there at rest, yet it is not a state of sleep and idleness; they have communion, not only with God, but with one another. All these glories but faintly represent heaven.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, help us to trust that you are our refuge and strength, our ever-present strength in times of trouble. You hold us in the palm of your hand. Enable us to go forward in that strength, secure in the knowledge that you have gone before and have prepared the road we travel. Renew us, refresh us as we serve you in our worship, prayer and action. Amen

Hymn

Safe in the arms of Jesus www.hymnary.org

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP 1

Hymn

Lord for the Years (CH4 159, MP 428)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, hear us as we pray for a place in our hearts for people who do not have a house or home to call their own. Let us build a home in our hearts and help wherever we can. May the government address the situation and build more affordable homes to ease the homelessness in our country. Even if all we can do is pray give us compassion and love for anyone known to us or otherwise. This we ask in Jesus name. Amen

Reading

Romans 15: 20

"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation."

Reflection

Leader: Let us think about those who don't have a house or home, the people of Ukraine, homeless people. When we see a homeless person begging in the streets we walk past, but do we give a thought to why they're there or what they have gone through maybe no fault of their own and have found themselves without somewhere to live or someone to care?

What about the people from Ukraine who have lost their homes and maybe not knowing what happened to loved ones, having to flee to strange countries to find somewhere to live?

Discussion

Let us think what we could do to help (e.g. food banks, the clothes we buy, lobbying the government, donating to charities involved with homeless etc..)

Prayer

Almighty God, thank you that we can meet as the Guild and make a difference in your world. We pray for all who need our help and now go in peace and love. Amen

Hymn

Father, hear the prayer we offer (CH4 255, MP 132)

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP 2

Setting the scene

Focus on the welcome: as folks come to the branch meeting: listen to them, encourage them, help them in whatever way you can. No one knows what others are carrying with them as they journey. May they know that as a Guild, a gathering of God's people, we love and care for them.

Set the room up in a different way, have the seating in a horseshoe shape and a small table in the middle with the Bible as a focus and a lighted tealight candle to represent Christ the light of the world.

Focussing all we do; on the Lord we serve.

Welcome and opening: Ask the group to reflect on what their Guild branch has achieved over the past year.

Write one-word answers on cards and pin them to the Guild notice board or write on a large piece of paper.

Reminders of what they have done for the Lord they serve.

Opening Hymn

Our reflection centres on the fact that ideas, thoughts and actions, however small, can inspire, encourage and grow into meaningful and often great things.

Bible reading

Ephesians 3: 14-20

Reflection

Leader: Life has changed for so many over the past few years. The struggles of Covid, the cost-of-living crisis and climate change issues have all had a major impact on many within our country and community. Worldwide, conflict, in its many forms, has devastated lives.

As a people of God, we have that Sure Foundation on which to focus. We have faith in a risen Lord who is with us, no matter the circumstances.

What can we as a Guild do to help others in crisis: reflect on this?

Things we might do

Seek guidance and inspiration through the reading of the word.

Join in fellowship within small groups or at services on a Sunday.

Support our local Churches in all they are trying to achieve in Christ's name.

Support local Food banks and clothing stores.

Donate to Fresh Start.

Support the Guild Projects.

Volunteer for the Care Van, who feed the homeless in our towns and cities.

Support aid agencies and charities working worldwide.

Pray

Lord as we come to you seeking your will for the life of our Guild branch, may we be ever open to your calling.

We know Father that you have a plan for every one of us and that nothing happens without your knowledge. Give us the faith to focus on you as we step out as a Guild of your people. There is much to be done, you are our sure foundation, the one who inspires us into action and guides us in all that we do in your name.

Go with each one of us as we focus on your will in the days ahead.

We pray all this in the name above all names, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT BIBLE STUDY

Warm-up activity

Warm-up with either a 'Jenga' tower-building session or building a house with Lego bricks and a base.

Reading

Isaiah 28: 16-17 (The Message) 'SURE FOUNDATIONS'

Here we see the reckless and overindulgent way of life of the Israelites coming under fire from God. They have gone their own sweet way and have disobeyed God's laws. But God is calling them back to his way and is setting out his plan for their lives. He is laying a foundation stone, a firm and tested cornerstone that is safe to build on.

(Note: The cornerstone in a building is crucial, as it provides the straight lines and pattern for the rest of the construction.)

And so it is with us. We are not able, on our own, to provide the firm foundation that we need for our lives. Only God can do that for us. When we build on his foundation stone, we will be stronger in the face of the problems that life throws at us and not knocked down by the storms.

The image of the plumb line reminds us that God builds with justice and integrity – 'keeping us on the straight and narrow' if you like.

This image of the cornerstone/foundation stone is repeated in the New Testament (1 Peter 2:6) and then Jesus himself maybe recalled this passage when he said 'Do not be like the foolish man but build your life on the sure foundation – on the rock and not on the sand.'

Think about images you have seen - buildings that have collapsed in recent times and are vulnerable, due to War/floods/earthquakes etc.

Question: What are the lasting things in our lives that we can trust most?

Reflecting on the message of our Bible reading

Question: How can we be sure of God's plan for our lives, and how do we measure our lives in relation to his plan?

Prayer

Each person to take a piece of Lego or Jenga brick or a pebble in their hands as we say the prayer:

This day may or may not have brought what we hoped for.

The building blocks of love and service
may have stood solidly or tumbled at our feet.

Your mystery may have enfolded us or failed to touch us in our labours.

Thank you, all the same, Lord for choosing and using us.

May we be anchored as ancient standing stones in God's grace. AMEN

(Adapted from a prayer in Living Stones/Pray Now, St. Andrew Press)

*You could sing the chorus: 'The wise man built his house upon a rock...'

NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE STUDY

Read

Matthew 7: 24-27 "The Wise and Foolish Builders"

This is a very familiar passage from the New Testament and all of us can relate to the parable taken at face value. Our T.V. screens regularly show us homes destroyed by floods and storms because they have been built on flood plains, with poor, or no foundations, or with inappropriate materials.

Jesus is conveying two important messages to us:

We should listen to his words.

We should act upon his words.

Obedience to Jesus is the only sure foundation for life.

Questions for Discussion:

Do you agree that obedience to Jesus is the only sure foundation for life?

Can you think of people who have led good lives, but not followed the Christian faith?

Only a house that has been built on a firm foundation can withstand a storm and in life we need a firm foundation to withstand the trials and tribulations that may face us.

Do you have personal experience of this in your own life or someone else's?

Read

1 Corinthians 3: 10-15

Paul, in establishing the early church, built on the foundation laid down by Jesus Christ and asked the members of the early church to do the same. He offered hope of salvation for those who tried, but were inadequate, because they had at least tried to do something for Jesus Christ.

Questions for Discussion:

Most of us will have tried to put our Christian faith into practice, but know we have fallen short?

Does it give comfort that God in His mercy will save you because you tried?

Setting the scene

Leader: How often have you sung confidently the last verse of Psalm 23 “Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me and in God’s house for evermore my dwelling place shall be”? Or how often have you recited The Apostles’ Creed quoting at the end “I believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. “ ?

These two passages are foundational to and building blocks of our Christian faith.

No matter the activity, there are basics which must be learned and experienced, whether that is reading, baking, or plastering. It is no different in the Christian faith. If the groundwork isn’t done there will be limitations as we try to grow in faith. In this bible study we are going to read about Stephen who had had an impact reaching far beyond his world and era.

As we approach this Bible Study let us ask “How confidently do I join in the affirmation of Psalm 23:6? How confidently do I hold to the above-mentioned statements of the Creed?

Stephen showed us how to live for Christ and to die trusting Christ. He was a Greek-speaking Jew whose background was Greek and with another six, was chosen to assist in the work of the early church.

Read

Acts 6: 1-7

Questions

- What is there in this passage that you noticed for the first time?
- What made an impact or disturbed you as you read it?
- What did you learn about God?

Read

Acts 7: 54-60.

Questions

- How did Stephen’s attitude reveal his absolute trust in Jesus not only for life but for life beyond death?
- How does Stephen’s story influence you?

BIBLE STUDY continued

One commentator claims that the Apostle Paul (at that time still known as Saul of Tarsus) probably ordered the execution of Stephen and as he witnessed it, Stephen's clothes were placed at his feet.

How do think this experience might have affected him first as Saul of Tarsus then later as the Apostle Paul?

Saul of Tarsus continued to be passionate about destroying the followers of the Way but his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road was pivotal. It changed him, and as the Apostle Paul, he became the greatest missionary ever. He took the Gospel deep into other parts of the world, Europe included. Through his letters, he gave us most of the New Testament where he often speaks of our relationship with Jesus as "union with Christ".

The relationship we have with Jesus is our basis for confidence in both quotations which are made above from Psalm 23 and the Apostles' Creed, giving us sure foundations on which to live out and make witness to our Faith.

Keeping in mind our quotation from the Apostles' Creed, we hear these two statements of Scripture: 1st John 1: 9 "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness"; and St John 11: 25 "I am the resurrection and the life.."

What do these statements say to us about Jesus?

Corrie Ten Boom, the former prisoner of war whose post-war books have inspired many once said: "If you look at the world you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. If you look at God, you'll be at rest". Her faith was secure in Christ. Ours can be too.



- Scene:** Front of hall set out with two chairs and a big box of books. Books already removed from box are lying haphazardly on one of the chairs.
- Narrator** Helen the Guild leader is bringing out books checking them then discarding them onto empty chair. She lets out a big sigh.
Moira one of the Leadership team comes in and says...
- Moira:** What on earth are you doing Helen?
- Helen:** (looks up and replies) I am searching for a Dramatized Bible I left in church ages ago.
- Moira:** (looks bemused) The Dramatized Bible! never heard of it.
- Helen:** I thought I would do something different this week by choosing one of Jesus's miracles as the reading.
In the Dramatized Bible the readings are presented as short dramas using a few readers. It kind of brings the story alive and it can be fun.
- Moira:** (sounding unconvinced) I suppose depends on who is reading.
- Helen:** The beauty is that the stories are simply written so anyone can take part.
- Narrator:** Helen continues to look into the box and her eye catches sight of the Bible and her faces lights up...
- Helen:** Here it is! I was beginning to think I had lost it forever.
- Narrator:** She pulls out a large book and Moira moves over to get a better look at the Bible. Helen opens it and flicks through the pages till she comes to the New Testament and finds a miracle in Matthew and she and Moira read through the story of Jesus at the wedding when he turned water into wine.
You know, I think as it is a story of Joy and reminds us that it is the very first miracle of Jesus recorded in the Bible I may use this as the first reading.
- Moira:** Who will you ask to read? not everyone is an actor after all.
- Helen:** Don't be so negative Moira you will be surprised!
- Narrator:** The two ladies start to discuss their members and who would be the readers. There are four parts in the reading and Helen and Moira mention various names then...

DRAMA 1

- Helen:** What if you and I both take part we can ask Susan and Heather to take the two smaller parts?
- Narrator:** Moira is clearly not convinced but nods in agreement.
- Moira:** When will this happen and do we need a rehearsal?
- Helen:** Hardly... it's short. I will photocopy the script and we can read through before the meeting.
- Narrator:** The ladies stack the other books back into the box and between them carry the box into the cupboard. Then they say goodbye to each other, then...
- Helen:** Don't worry Moira, it will be fun and just think the next one we can do is when Jesus washes the Disciple's feet!!
You will be perfect as Jesus.
- Narrator:** Helen leaves Moira looking speechless but then she bursts out laughing.
Moira walks back to Helen and takes Helen's arm and they walk out laughing
- Helen:** Just teasing you! We will choose a reading to suit the Theme Guide.
- Narrator:** At the meeting the ladies read the drama and it was received with great enthusiasm by the members.

Scene:

A group of Guild members before the start of the meeting.

Cathy:

I wish we could sing the hymn 'Let us build a house'

Margaret:

Why that one?

Cathy:

Well the Church is a bit up and down at the moment nobody is quite sure what is happening.

Jean:

Why would singing that hymn make any difference?

Cathy:

The hymn is not about the building it is about us.

Margaret:

I am confused.!

Cathy:

It says let us build a house where love can dwell where there are hopes and dreams and visions where the love of Christ can end divisions.

It's a bit like the Billy Goat Gruff story but we can't huff and puff and blow it down - we are too old - but together we can build a strong foundation because we are the Guild.

IDEAS FOR MEETINGS

Card making

1. For many tasks, including card making you need glue. I use PVA glue. Collect the lids from milk cartons. These are the right size to hold just enough glue. Small strips of card make good spreaders and cocktail sticks are ideal to apply small amounts of glue.
2. Collect card fronts from Christmas and Easter cards. Many cards can be made from sticking stuff on to the card.
3. Cut out interesting bits from your collected cards. And stick them on.
4. You may also use stickers from craft shops and, the card with the dried stuff on it, the grasses came from a garden centre.
5. It is also fun to collect grasses from your own garden or from round about. Flowers may also be pressed to give you stuff with which your cards can be created.
6. It is best to buy packs of cards as these have envelopes that fit.
7. Store all your stuff in a tin that can be easily picked up and taken to a meeting.

Bobbles

You need: polystyrene shapes, sequins, beads, pins, bits of thread and some bows.

1. You have a polystyrene shape, pins, and sequins.
2. Fix your bits on to the shape by putting the pin through a bead and through the sequin and use the pin to secure all on to your polystyrene shape.
3. Keep going until your shape is covered.

Paper chains

It's the people who make the "Sure Foundations" based on the Word of God. You can make a paper chain of people and write on each what you think makes sure foundations of our faith.

What you need: paper, scissors and pen

Instructions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pocc2DdmrF4>

(It may be easier to draw the person on the folded paper and then cut out)

Games session

Some Guild members will have board games in their houses. Ask them to bring their games to a meeting. Tea, coffee juice and nibbles. It is a good laugh play Scrabble, Cluedo or Monopoly.

OTHER RESOURCES

Books

- Grounded: Building a Firm Foundation in Christ
- <https://Amazon.co.uk>: Adeseke, Mr Emmanuel: 9781537781181: Books
- The Foundations of Christian Living by Bob Gordon
- <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Foundations-Chrtistian-liviong-practical-Foundation/dp/1852404795> ISBN -10 1852404796

Poems

- It's All in His Name by Deborah Ann Belka <https://poetrybydeborahann.wordpress.com/tag/sure-foundation>
- Our only Foundation by Margaret Cagle
- www.christart.com/poetry/poem/7072
- A Sure Foundation by johntatumaker
- <https://allpoetry.com/poem/14727157--A-Sure-Foundation--byjohntatumaker>
- A Word on Building Houses Bettina Van Vaerenbergh <https://www.christart.com/poetry/poem/8133>

Music

- 'Sure Foundation': Chips Tenoso
- 'Firm Foundation' (He Won't) by Cody Carnes
- 'Sure Foundation': Pinelake Worship
- 'Jesus You're My Firm Foundation': Don Moen

DISCUSSION TOPIC

Introduction

As the Guild embarks on its new strategy: 'Let Us Build a House', and the year one theme 'Sure Foundations', we have an opportunity to discuss the ways we, as Guild members, serve our Lord right where we are and how we can build on that over the next three years.

To help you focus on your service within your churches and communities, the discussion topic will aim to look at three pillars of the Guild Movement - Faith, Fellowship and Friendship, Action and Mission. Over the next three years our discussion topics will focus on these elements.

- **Faith: The reason we serve (2024/25 - Sure Foundations)**
- **Fellowship and Friendship: Encouraging one another (2025/26 - The Living Stones)**
- **Action and Mission: Reaching out to others (2026/27- Beyond the Walls)**

Over 2024/25 we encourage you all to discuss the sure foundations of your faith and how that impacts on all we do to serve our Lord. The following Bible verses are surely a good place to start.

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.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
(Matthew 22:36-40)

"He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge." (Isaiah 33: 6)



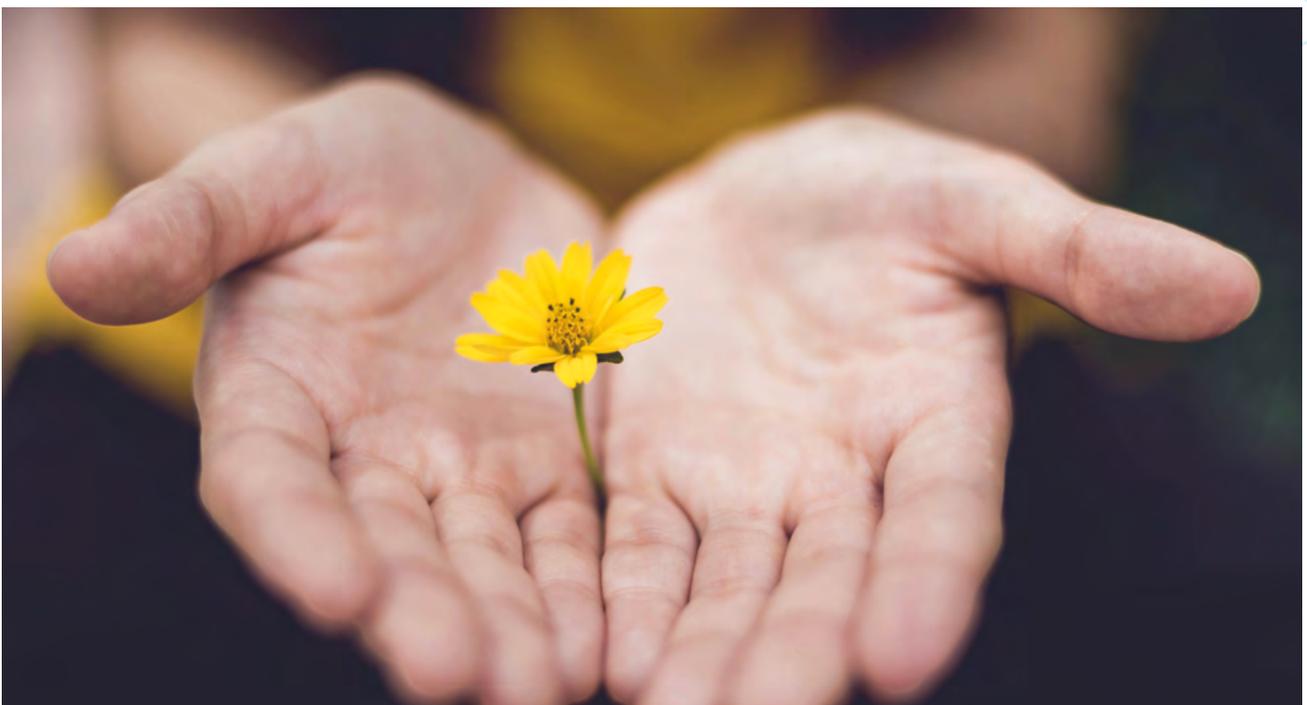
Discussion: The action or process of talking about something in order to reach a decision or to exchange ideas

What is the purpose of the discussion topic?

- It's all about communicating and encouraging you to air your views on specific / important issues
- It gives you the opportunity to hear the views of others often triggering new thoughts/ ideas of your own
- It gives you confidence to know you are not alone in your thoughts / concerns
- It gives a focus to identify areas of concern / issues / wishes
- It clarifies 'where we are' at present and can often identify next steps and perhaps how these could be shared with others

We have given you a biblical framework on which to build your discussion, but this is not supposed to be a Bible Study. You can use the elements of this framework in the way which suits you best.

With this in mind let's have a look at this year's discussion topic '**Serving in Faith**' and how you could use this at one of your Guild meetings.



DISCUSSION TOPIC

Leading a Guild meeting using the Discussion Topic

Suggested Opening Prayer:

Father God, your splendour and majesty are displayed in everything we see around us, both near and far, and extend to those parts of the universe we indeed cannot see. Yet, Lord, we know that you care for each and every one of your creatures – humans, animals on the earth, in the sky, and in the sea. You know everything about us, and we also know that we, through our own fault, have brought about many of the world's problems, and we do humbly repent.

Recent years should have taught us that in order to know your wishes for us, and to bow to your glory, we need first to put our faith in your hands entirely. Without Christ in our lives, we cannot seek to mend a world we have broken. Help us Father, to join together, stronger because of our shared faith in you, and help us today to explore and to identify ways in which we can openly declare this faith and build on our common desire to make a difference in your service and in your name, in the knowledge and belief that you are our Saviour. We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen

Suggested Hymns

Brother, sister let me serve you (CH4 694)

Let us build a house (CH4 198)

Make me a channel of your peace (CH4 528)

A new commandment (MP1)

The Church's one foundation (CH4 739)

Readings

Deuteronomy 32: 4

1 Samuel 2: 2

2 Samuel 22: 47

Psalms 62: 21

Psalms 118: 22

Isaiah 28 :16

DISCUSSION TOPIC

Matthew 7: 24 - 29

Acts 27:23-25 Whose we are and whom we serve.

1 Corinthians 3:11

Colossians 3:23

Ephesians 2 :19/20

1 Peter 2 :6

Resources

Paper/flip chart paper/pens/markers for each group.

Introduction

(On arriving at the meeting, divide your members into small groups by giving them a number or a symbol).

Start by asking the whole group what comes to mind on hearing the word 'foundations' (be aware there may be some mention of foundation garments!).

End by giving the dictionary definition i.e. 'the basis on which something stands'; 'an underlying basis or principle'.

Focus of the small group discussion:

Discussion part 1

- Can you recall when your journey of faith began? How did it start?
- Who was instrumental in setting you on that journey?
- Was there anyone who really inspired you along the way? (parents, teacher, relation etc)
- Think of three things/activities that may have helped you grow your faith (e.g. Sunday Worship, small groups, courses, Bible reading programme, Scripture Union)
- Discuss why/ how these ways/ activities enhanced your faith (e.g. extended knowledge and understanding of scripture, encouraged by the testimony of others, teased out / discussed faith issues, curbing doubts, listening for the voice of God)

Discussion part 2

- Growing in faith gives us the confidence to serve the Lord... discuss
- Think of three ways that you serve the Lord in your congregation/community
- Think of three new ways you can serve the Lord within your congregation and community and how these could be taken forward

Feedback from the small groups to the whole group

DISCUSSION TOPIC

Suggested closing prayer

Heavenly Father, we bring our thanks for the abundance of blessings you give us every day, the greatest of which is the blessing of your unconditional love. You are our anchor in the storms of life and you are always with us. We thank you for this time of reflection, of examining and exploring our faith, of encouragement and endorsement and of sharing our thoughts with others. Help us always look to you to guide and nurture us in all that we do.

We know you walk with us and will never forsake us, walking in front to lead us, walking beside to encourage us and walking behind to help us up when we falter. Teach us to open our eyes, our ears, our hearts and minds to your presence and promises and to share your love with everyone we meet on life's journey.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, whose we are and whom we serve.
Amen



