

Bible Use Policy of Ardoch and Blackford Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC000139

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. As part of the Church of Scotland we affirm that God's Word which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is our supreme rule of faith and life.

We are therefore committed to the use of our Bibles prayerfully, personally, corporately, expectantly and regularly. We are humble in our submission to God's Word yet confident in its authority and application, recognising with the Apostle Paul that "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Bible's content, purpose, message and authority are the basis of and at the heart of our communication in person – in services, group Bible Studies etc - and electronically or in print via The Link, websites etc.

We recognise that when we have a lectern Bible brought in, opened and read, the significance of doing that is not shared if we don't have and encourage a pattern of other Bibles being brought in, opened and read by the congregation.

We want to encourage the public reading of God's Word from the Bible and therefore commit to building the confidence and knowledge of readers to read from the lectern Bibles rather than a piece of preprinted paper. Despite the online options available to us, learning to navigate a physical Bible is an important aspect of Christian nurture and discipleship for those who are able to do this, so we will invest in any necessary training for readers to approach reading from the Bible with increased confidence and authority.

We are also committed to encouraging and facilitating the following of Scripture readings by the congregation in-person and online. Again, this physical task of navigating a Bible allows individuals to join up the dots (figuratively or literally) to see how a reading fits to the overall narrative and flow of the Bible and within the context of what else was happening or being said in surrounding passages. Some of this can be done on a phone or tablet app such as YouVersion which has a convenience and usefulness for some people, but for most a physical Bible will gather and focus attention more easily. We therefore give clear directions in terms of book, chapter, verse and page numbers from the Bibles available in our buildings. We give active encouragement to turn up and follow our Bible readings where possible and we give time for attendees to do that looking up of our readings or other references. Unless a particular point of contrast is to be drawn, we will read from the Bible version used in the appropriate building.

Despite our repeated mention of Bible reading thus far, our concern and ambition is for more than reading as expressed in our use of terms such as “Bible use” (for example in the title of this policy) or also “Bible engagement.”

Bible engagement is wider than *Bible reading* making good use as individuals and congregations of audio, film, performance or other ways to take in what the Bible is saying particularly but not exclusively for those who find reading difficult.

Bible engagement is also deeper than *Bible reading* encouraging prayerful, devotional, personal thought and reflection, purposeful group discussions and biblical teaching all looking to interpret and apply the Word of God through the Spirit of God. We recognise that preaching is central to the Church of Scotland's way of worshiping God, sharing a message drawn out of a passage from the Bible which aims to help people interpret and apply the Bible's teaching to modern life. But we also recognise our responsibility to encourage and facilitate a self-disciplined approach to regular, personal Bible engagement and to group Bible study and discussion.

In all this we recognise that, metaphorically, the Bible is the menu not the meal. We want to help people to use it well so that, together, we can have life transforming and live shaping encounters with Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. It is in him that we find forgiveness, identity, purpose, calling and mission as his disciples and followers.

For more information please see:

churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-faith

churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-faith/statements-of-the-churchs-faith

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