

Musings from the Manse

Dear friends,

Last month we looked at how God uses the *Commanding Scripture* to guide us in our Christian walk with Jesus. This month we're going to look at the second CS that God guides us in our Christian lives- the *Compelling Spirit*.

We probably associate guidance from the Spirit with passages that relate the Holy Spirit 'speaking' to a believer- e.g. in Acts 8. 29 says 'the Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it"' or in Acts 10. 19-20 we read, 'While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them"' or Acts 13. 2, in the context of the church at Antioch, where we read, 'While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."'

The issue with relying on this form of Holy Spirit guidance is that, besides a number of other biblical and theological concerns, it can be very subjective and open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. 'God told me' is a phrase that always makes me uneasy, not because I don't believe God speaks but because as it often turns out he has supposedly spoken in ways to people that contradict what he says in the Bible, which is His *recorded* and *written* voice. If I was to dictate a message for someone who recorded it on a Dictaphone but they then relayed it differently, there would be a question of authenticity and reliability raised, and quite rightly so.

So, when it comes to guidance from the Holy Spirit I believe we find the key is to be found in the way the Bible tells us the Holy Spirit functions: I want to suggest 4 words and 4 scriptures for us to consider and further study:

Delighting: *Psalm 37.4* says, 'delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart'. Make the Lord your delight and joy and give him the glory in your life and he will work in our hearts to desire after him and his ways. God's Spirit will indeed be speaking into our lives as we do this.

Growing: *Galatians 5. 22* says, 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'. Guidance from the Spirit is given as He grows this fruit in our lives, and as this fruit grows, our lives are guided and governed by the Spirit. Our daily prayer is 'Holy Spirit, bear your fruit in me.'

Obeying: *Galatians 5. 25* says, 'Since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit.' The phrase 'keep in step' is a term used to describe people walking together under direction and authority. In the context of this passage it refers to a lifestyle and lifestyle choices that are contrary to the 'works of the flesh' (v19-21). The Spirit guides us in paths of righteousness not ungodliness.

Recognising: *Romans 8. 14-16* says, 'those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.' Recognising that we are God's family is the Spirit's way of shaping our minds so that we think like Christians and act like Christians also. Knowing we are loved and saved and cherished and adopted into God's family in itself is a means the Spirit uses to guide our thoughts and actions. Knowing God is our Father, Jesus is our elder brother and Saviour and the Holy Spirit is our Comforter and Counsellor shapes our lives and guides the direction we go in. We ask in all we do, 'Is this what my Father is pleased with? Is this what honours my brother Jesus? Is this what bears the fruit of the Holy Spirit?'

May we all seek the guidance of God's Spirit in *delighting, growing, obeying* and *recognising* and know His guidance daily.

In the next Newsletter I will look at the next means of God's guidance- the Counsel of the Saints (the church).

Your friend and Pastor
Colin
Rev Colin MacLeod

Ps. I am due to be on holiday from Monday 10th July, returning Monday 31st. John Macaulay (Session Clerk) in the first instance or any of the elders and Malcolm Maclean (Greyfriars) are available to contact should any emergency issue arise during that time.

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Please remember the following people in your prayers –

Illnesses or Hospital

Miss Florence Williamson

Housebound

Mrs Anna Cameron

Mrs Margaret Grant

Mr Archie McArthur

Mrs Mary MacDonald

Mrs Effie MacIver

Mrs Christine MacRae

Residential Homes

Mrs Mary McCulloch – Aden House

Miss Betty MacRae – Ballifeary

Mrs Anna MacLeod – Ballifeary

Miss Nan MacDonald - Ballifeary

Mrs Joan Macleman – Fairfield Home

Mrs Margaret MacAulay - Highview

Mrs Joan Lamont - Highview

Mrs Dolly Campbell – Isobel Fraser Home

Mr Alasdair and Mrs Barbara Morrison, Isobel Fraser Home

Mrs Ishbel Graham - Kingsmills Home

CONGRATULATIONS

To Calum and Lorna Smith on the birth of their second child Karis Christina Alice born on Wednesday 5th July at 4.48am, weighing 7lbs 8ozs. A wee sister for Eilidh. ‘The promise is to you and to your children’ (Acts 2. 39)

Colin

KIRK SESSION NEWS

- Candidates for office have been identified by the Kirk Session and over the next 3 months these men will undergo a modicum of training and experience comprising of being co-opted onto the Kirk Session and Deacons’ Court, engaging in pastoral visits with an elder and assigned to a Strategy group. Please pray for the men.

Eldership - Brian Cameron, Calum Smith, Martin Maclean, Stewart Vant, John Macleod

Diaconate - Ed Cameron-Mackintosh, Cathel Innes, Robbie Finlay, Rob Maciver, Darren Graham

- Gavin Sutherland has resigned from office

DEACONS' COURT NEWS

- A perspex covering for the window behind the pulpit has been put in place at a cost of £4,200. This will prevent further leaks occurring.
- All the windows in the hall have now been curtained at a cost of £3798. This will address the issues with the acoustics in the hall.
- John Macleod was recently appointed Health and Safety Officer
- Ed Cameron-Mackintosh has been appointed Gift Aid treasurer
- Kenny Robertson resigned from office.
- Internet is now available throughout the church

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

WfM Supper Evening

On Friday 9th June over 80 folk attended the annual supper evening which raised over £500. Funds raised this year will go towards: GIGA Uganda; Richard and Barbara Davies in Marseille; Suraj Kasula, Nepal and the WfM Support a Volunteer fund. For more information on these projects please go to <http://www.womenformission.org/>

Congregational Fellowships

For our final Fellowship for the term on the 25th June we had the usual food and fellowship and then praise with a quiz thrown into the mix. These meetings have served the purpose of encouraging friendships and praise as well as involving folk in the preparation and provision of food for the night. Should anyone wish to be involved in a team that takes responsibility for the food on an evening then please do speak to Jessie.

Ian Polworth

To mark Ian Polworth's retirement at the end of July a presentation was made to him at the morning service on June 18th and a farewell buffet with speeches took place in the hall on Thursday 30th June. Ian and Sandra were accompanied by some family members and with a full hall a wonderful evening of fellowship was had. Speeches were made by Stevie Wylie (Beechwood House), Sandy Shaw

(Prison Fellowship), Chris Smart (Ferintosh and former Assistant in the Free North), Donalda Mackenzie (organiser of the catering for the night and one of the founding members of R2R) and Martin Maclean (Drug and Alcohol Support Worker) which all reflected on the greatest strength that Ian possesses in his work - his character and personality which he uses to build a relationship with folk and to point people to Christ. Ian retires on 28th July and we wish him every blessing in his retirement.

Colin

Martin Luther

This year marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. In October 1517 Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

During the Summer the Holiday Sunday School the children will be finding out about these events. You can watch a short animation if you type in 'The Story of Martin Luther (Playmobil Animation) - You Tube

Murdo Murchison

Murdo's book , 'One Careful Owner' which he wrote during his illness is available in the congregation. It is free but you are asked to make a minimum donation of £7 to Stirling Free Church.

There are two ways you can make your donation: either put your money in an envelope marked 'Murdo' and we will pass it on or go to

<http://www.goldengiving.com/wall/stirling-free-church>

With the later method Gift Aid will be added to the amount you donate.

God is at work in Malawi

Earlier this year we had a visit from Clapperton Mayuni, the General Secretary of the Bible Society of Malawi. He spoke of how the Scottish Bible Society is supporting the work of making God's Word available in Malawi through programmes like 'Let the Children Encounter Christ' and the 'Family Scripture Engagement Programme'. There is great need for Bibles, especially for young people. Many Children walk for almost 2 hours just to attend a 40 minute Sunday School.

From the 22nd September to the 2nd October I will be part of a Vision Visit to Malawi to see the work that is being done.

Next month you will have the opportunity to make a contribution to the work of the Bible Society in Malawi. You can read about the work on scottishbiblesociety.org/appeals/malawi-2017.

Sandy Finlay

Home Groups

In our next series we will be using Fruitfulness on the Frontline. The first meeting will be on 16th August and we meet once a month. We would encourage every one who can to attend a group. You will enjoy the study and get to know people. If you would like to attend a group speak to Sandy Finlay or Archie Fraser.

Sandy Finlay

Tumpletots – Parent and Toddler Group

Tumpletots finished on 28 June and will resume on 16 August. Since the start of this term, we have had quite a few new Mums/Grandparents/Carers coming along, as well as those who have been coming regularly for a long time, and each week there are around 6 babies and 8-10 toddlers, which has been a great encouragement.

Our normal programme is for the children to have a time of play and activities (playdough, drawing, crafts), followed by singing, and finishing with a healthy snack (with some sweet treats!) and tea and cake for the adults. We subscribe to the Care and Learning Alliance, and Marianne Nairn of CALA comes along to Tumpletots every fortnight doing a range of activities, painting, 'messy' play and a Bookbug session, which is very popular with the older children; as well as sensory activities for the babies. We would encourage parents and carers from the congregation to come along with babies/toddlers.

It is a privilege to be involved in this work, and as we engage with those who come along each week, we pray that God would bless us, and enable us to witness for Him.

We were encouraged to receive a letter from one of the Mums at the end of the session – “Thank you so much for all your hard work every week and all your love and care for the wee ones and their carers. You’re all so welcoming and the children have a great time. Thank you again.”

Murina Anderson/Alison Waite

Dates for the Diary

July

Sunday 2 nd	Colin taking all 3 services
Tuesday 4 th	Congregational lunch and devotional in the hall from 12.30 to 2pm. All very welcome.
Wednesday 5 th	Prayer round tables at 7.30pm in the hall
Thursday 6 th	Office bearers' prayer meeting at 8am
Sunday 9 th	Colin taking all 3 services Isobel Fraser service at 3pm
Wednesday 12 th	Martin Maclean taking the Mid week meeting
Sunday 16 th	Sandy Finlay taking FN services and Ian Polworth taking MS service Cameron House service at 3pm
Wednesday 19 th	Darren Graham taking the mid week meeting
Sunday 23 rd	Innes Macsween taking all 3 services
Wednesday 26 th	Chris Macleod taking the mid week meeting
Sunday 30 th	Ronnie Philips taking FN services and Martin Maclean taking MS service
Monday 31 st	Colin back from holiday

August

Wednesday 2 nd	Prayer round tables at 7.30pm in the hall
Thursday 3 rd	Office Bearers' Prayer Meeting at 8am
Sunday 6 th	Colin taking all 3 services
Sunday 13 th	Colin taking all 3 services Isobel Fraser service at 3pm
Wednesday 16 th	Tumbletots recommences
Sunday 20 th	Colin taking FN services and Sandy taking MS service
Sunday 27 th	Colin taking FN am service, Darren taking the MS service and Sandy taking the FN evening service (Colin in Burghead in evening)

MADRAS STREET NEWS

20 Schemes

Mez and Miriam McConnell of 20Schemes visited Madras Street on Thursday 29th June. They spent the day interviewing people and assessing the work that goes on in and out of the Hall and the House with a view to proposing a partnership

between the Free North and 20Schemes in Madras Street for the purpose of establishing a Church with membership and leadership from the environs. The Kirk Session will meet after the Summer break to consider any proposal made. Please be much in prayer about this.

Colin

OTHER NEWS

Blythswood – Highland Foodbank

Lorna Dempster from Highland Foodbank has written to thank the Free North for their donations so far this year, and have requested the following items for July/August –

Tins of Potatoes

Tins of Fruit

Tins of Corned Beef

Sugar

They would also appreciate donations of “Bags for Life” – they do not need to be new, but are vital for people taking their shopping away from the Foodbank.

The Foodbank still have vacancies for volunteers at Foodbank centres in Hilton and Madras Street. If you can spare a couple of hours each week/fortnight please get in touch with Lorna on lorna.dempster@blythswood.org.

HELPFUL THOUGHTS

Service

“Service for The Master must be possessed of the sacrificial spirit of The Master. We cannot heal the needs we do not feel. They are poor who have never suffered,”

“All that we long to do for God are within the possibilities of faith. If we weigh things in the scales of human reasoning alone, we will always deal in expediency and economics.”

“We must trust where we cannot trace and give God the sovereignty He longs for in our lives.”

“He will breathe into our hearts the Heavenly hope and will not deceive or fail us when we press on to do His will.”