

Musings from the Manse

Dear friends,

One of the great truths of the Bible is that our existence on this earth is not by accident but by design. In Psalm 139. 13-14, as David reflects on his life in relation to God he says, 'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well'.

Because God designed you, he has a purpose in mind. God loves you. He has a specific, unique and glorious destiny for you. His will and desire is that we turn our lives over from our own direction and control to His. Through faith in Jesus He promises to forgive all our sins, restore our relationship with God and then guide us through life into eternity.

God's purpose for you is bigger than your mistakes. We have all made many mistakes in our lives, but God has not stopped guiding us.

We have a Sat Nav in our car. When we take a wrong turn, it reroutes us. But it never gives up until we reach our destination. You can ignore it or switch it off, but if you follow it, it makes your journey more enjoyable and peaceful. Eventually, it will say 'You have reached your destination.' Psalm 84. 7 says, 'from strength to strength unwearied go, still forward unto strength, until in Zion (heaven) we appear before the Lord at length.

Of course, this is not a perfect analogy. God is not a machine but a person who is with us on the journey. God wants to communicate with you and has promised to guide you.

There are five main ways in which God guides us (the five CSs):

- **C**ommanding Scripture (the Bible)
- **C**ompelling Spirit (the Holy Spirit)
- **C**ounsel of the **S**aints (the church)
- **C**ommon **S**ense (reason)
- **C**ircumstantial Signs (providence).

Hopefully, over the course of the next few months, we'll look at each in turn. In the meantime, remember this: you have a purpose in life and that is to know the Lord and to belong to Him.

Your friend and Pastor

Colin

Rev Colin MacLeod

.....

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

Miss Nan MacDonald - Ballifeary

Mrs Joan Macleman – Fairfield Home

Mrs Margaret MacAulay - Highview

Mrs Joan Lamont - Highview

Mrs Dolly Campbell – Isobel Fraser Home

Mrs Anna MacLeod – Isobel Fraser Home

Mr Alasdair and Mrs Barbara Morrison, Isobel Fraser Home

Mrs Ishbel Graham - Kingsmills Home

FAREWELL

We are sorry to be losing Kenny and Marlene Lobban, who, along with Katie and Fraser, will be moving to Bonar Bridge in early June. We pray God's blessing on them as they move and trust they will settle into their new home

Colin

KIRK SESSION NEWS

Communion Services

At our April communion we had Ian Morrison, Castle Street Baptist Church, preaching on Friday night and Ian Watson Hope Free Church, Kirkmuirhill, preaching on Saturday night and three services on Sunday. We are thankful to the Lord for Christina Mackenzie professing her faith and joining the membership of the Free North and we pray the Lord would continue to grow us in every way!

Colin

DEACONS' COURT NEWS

INCOME & EXPENDITURE for JANUARY TO APRIL 2017

GENERAL FUND

INC	£35,569.00
EXP	<u>£ 44,759.00</u>
BALANCE	<u><u>- £ 9,190.00</u></u>

FABRIC FUND

INC	£486.00
EXP	<u>-</u>
BALANCE	<u><u>£486.00</u></u>

MADRAS STREET MISSION FUND

INC	£5,412.00
EXP	<u>£1,020.00</u>
BALANCE	<u><u>£ 4,392.00</u></u>

ROAD TO RECOVERY FUND

INC	£ 13,018.00
EXP	<u>£ 13,613.00</u>
BALANCE	<u><u>- £ 595.00</u></u>

DEVELOPMENT FUND

INC	£ 23,094.00
EXP	<u></u>
BALANCE	<u><u>£23,094.00</u></u>

These are Fund Balances not Bank Balances

GIFT AID

Those who pay Tax on their salaries or pensions are able to claim Gift Aid up to the amount of Tax they pay. This benefits the funds of the Free North Church at no cost to the giver as the Church can reclaim the tax. Anyone who wishes to start claiming Give Aid can get a form from either Angus or Susan Fraser or Rena MacLean (Gift Aid Treasurer)

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

Visit of Duncan Peters

Last week we heard about Duncan's work in Asian Outreach and how he has been able to understand Islamic culture and relate to Muslims. He shared with us some of the friendships that have developed and the lessons he has learned. Many of the lessons apply to other contexts as we relate to neighbours and others that we meet. He showed us how important it is that we are Christ like in the way that we relate to everyone.

Sandy

Home Groups

The last of our official home groups meets this month, as we come to an end of the study series '*Transformed: Becoming like God's Son.*' As we take a break for a couple of months we hope to recommence again in August when we will begin looking at the series '*Fruitfulness on the Frontline (FOFL)*'. This is in line with our strategy proposal on *Discipleship* which is to encourage a missional mind set for the congregation through resources like this. *FOFL* is a DVD with discussion material offering a fresh, simple framework for discovering a rich variety of ways God may work in us and through us right where we are. The study is over eight sessions and explores six ways we can be fruitful for the Lord wherever we are. They are called the 6M's;

- **M**odelling Godly Character
- **M**aking Good Work
- **M**inistering Grace and Love
- **M**oulding Culture
- **M**outhpiece for Truth and Justice
- **M**essenger of the Gospel

So there's an introductory session and a closing session also. Leaders will meet in June to go through the course and be equipped to lead their home groups through the course commencing in August.

Colin

Annual Congregational Supper Evening

This is planned for the evening of 9th June in the church hall at 7pm. As in previous years there will be no set charge but there will be a collection in support of the WfM Project. Please put the date in your diary and plan to come along - children and young people are especially invited and if you let me know there can be different food available for them. For the rest of us it will be a cold buffet table and desserts!! Nearer the time booking slips will be available and transport will be arranged for those who need it.

Afternoon Tea

We plan to have an afternoon tea in the Madras Street Hall at 2.45pm on Tuesday 30 May along with folk from the Dingwall congregation. This follows on from our visit to Dingwall last autumn and it is hoped that there will be a good attendance of men as well as women! We hope that Martin Maclean will be able to speak about his work and there will be an opportunity to support the work that he and Ian Polworth are involved in. It would be really good if people could invite those who are not able to get out much and if there are problems with transport please let me know. If you would like to help with the food, serving or supplying transport, please get in touch.

Jane Macleod

Ladies' Visiting Teams

Would you be interested in being part of a ladies' visiting team keeping in touch with people in our congregation who are housebound, lonely or just getting on in years? Although some ladies already enjoy doing this among themselves, the Officebearers' Strategy Group involved in Community feels that there are still a number of people associated with the Free North who do not have regular visits and who would appreciate contact. The Strategy Group would be pleased to hear from any lady who would like to be involved in visiting. It is suggested that visits are done regularly, preferably in pairs, visiting one or more homes at mutually convenient times. If you feel you could help please put your details on one of the forms that can be found at the doors. A meeting for all those interested will take place soon.

Alec MacPhail, Innes Fraser, Archie Fraser

Dates for the Diary

May

Wednesday 3rd	Tumbletots meets in the hall from 10-11.30am every Wednesday (Care & Learning Alliance come every 2 weeks)
Thursday 4 th	Prayer round tables at 7.30pm in the hall
Friday 5 th	Office Bearers' prayer meeting at 8am 3:16 Teens for teenagers meets in the Manse from 6.30-8pm every Friday
Sunday 7 th	Colin taking all 3 services

Tuesday 9th Congregational lunch and devotional in the hall from 12.30 to 2pm

Wednesday 10th Duncan Peters (AO) speaking at mid-week meeting at 7.30pm

Saturday 13th Likely Dads in the hall from 10.30am to 12pm every 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month
Classic Car Rally Café in the hall from 11.30am to 2pm
Acclaim Choir at 7pm in the Free North

Sunday 14th Sandy Finlay taking FN services and Ian Polwarth taking MS service (Colin at Leith communion)
Isobel Fraser service at 3pm

Tuesday 16th Kirk Session at 7pm

Wednesday 17th Home groups at 7.30pm

Sunday 21st Colin taking all 3 services
Cameron House service at 3pm

Monday 22nd General Assembly meets Monday to Thursday this week

Sunday 28th Colin taking FN AM service, Martin Maclean taking the MS service and Alasdair Macleod (Smithton) taking the FN evening service (Colin in Smithton)
Congregational Fellowship with Daniel and Jennifer Rajkumar, who have worked in Emmanuel Hospital Association, India, currently working in Raigmore Hospital.

June

Sunday 4th Colin taking FN services and Sandy taking MS service

Wednesday 7th Prayer round tables at 7.30pm in the hall

Thursday 8th Office Bearer's prayer meeting

Friday 9th WfM Supper evening at 7.30pm in the hall

Sunday 11th Baptism service at 11am taken by Kenny Macleod (Dowanvale) and Colin taking the MS service and FN service in the evening
Isobel Fraser service at 3pm

Tuesday 13th Congregational lunch and devotional in the hall from 12.30 to 2pm. All very welcome.

Sunday 18th Colin taking the FN morning service and the MS service.
Joint service in Greyfriars at 6pm with John Blanchard
Cameron House service at 3pm

Sunday 25th

Colin taking FN services and Sandy taking the MS service. The morning service will be a Family Service and the Sunday School Prize giving
Congregational Fellowship- Quiz

Wednesday 28th

20 Schemes assessment visit to Madras Street

MADRAS STREET NEWS

Madras Street Mission – Three cheers for the Co-op!

We have been successful with an application to the Co-op's Local Community Fund to help some of our young people at Madras Street to go to Free Church camps this year – 10 boys and girls. The funds raised will also help pay for an outing to the pantomime along with parents and helpers.

To start with, over £2,000 has been awarded and this will be topped up with 1% of purchases made by customers who are Co-op members when they purchase Co-op branded goods and services between now and October. If you are a member, and you have an on-line e-mail account, you can choose the Madras Street Sunday Club as the cause you wish to support at <https://www.coop.co.uk/membership/local-community-fund>. If you are a member but don't have an e-mail account, your 1% will be divided among the various local good causes. You can become a member of the Co-op on-line or in-store for £1.

OTHER NEWS

Events

CSW and Release International are holding an event in Smithton Free Church on Saturday 20th May at 7.30pm. In order to raise awareness, prayer and practical support for persecuted Christians, Robert de Berry will celebrate his 75th birthday by cycling from Cape Wrath in Scotland to Peacehaven in West Sussex. This is a journey of over 750 miles and Robert and his friends are hoping to raise £50,000. That's an ambitious undertaking and target for someone celebrating his 75th birthday! Come along and hear Robert speak out about the plight of so many for the faith. Don't miss this inspiring meeting and opportunity to make a difference.

Gideons - Also on the 20th at 7.30pm in Inshes Church, the Inverness branch of Gideons is holding a meeting with Jonathan Lamb speaking. Jonathan is minister-at-large for Keswick Ministries, supporting the work in the UK and often speaking at other Keswicks around the world. He previously served as CEO of Keswick Ministries and has served on the charity's Council (Board of Trustees). He is the author, with Ian Randall, of 'Knowing God Better: the vision of the Keswick movement', and has also published a Keswick Foundations title 'Preaching Matters: encountering the living God' (IVP). He also serves as a Vice President of IFES. Jonathan will be speaking at Celt Street on Friday 19th and Saturday 20th also. The times will be:

Session 1	Friday 19th - 8:00 to 9:00
Session 2	Saturday 20th - 10:00 - 11:00
Tea/Coffee	11:00 - 11:30
Session 3	Saturday 11:30 - 12:30

Colin

Prayer Request

Many of you will remember Matt O'Neill from the British Transport Police. He shared his testimony with us and something of the work of Christian Police Association and Street/Rail Pastors as well at a congregational fellowship a few months ago. Matt has been in touch to say that on 25th May 2017 there is a national day of prayer for the police. He says 'I would be very grateful if you could join in by praying for the officers in your area and encourage those in your congregations to do the same'. There are documents at the doors about praying for the police which may be of interest/help to some. Please do pick up a copy and use on the day to inform your prayers

Colin

Helpful Thoughts

Without God our week would be:
"Sunday.....Sinday
Monday.....Mournday
Tuesday.....Tearsday
Wednesday....Wasteday
Thursday.....Thirstday
Friday.....Frightday
Saturday.....Shatterday"
7 Days without God makes one weak!!