

Musings from the Manse

Dear friends,

Over the last two months we've looked at the ways God uses to give us guidance. We reflected on *Commanding Scripture* and then the *Compelling Spirit*. This month we're looking at the *Counsel of the Saints*.

Proverbs 11:14 says, 'For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure' and **Proverbs 15:22** adds 'Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed'. Together, along with many other Scriptures, the Bible reminds us of the importance of taking counsel from other people, but especially from God's people who are called 'saints' not because of our moral superiority (far from it), but because the word describes 'being set apart for God' and that is what we are, through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 1.7, 2 Cor 1. 1 etc). Ps 25. 14 tells us 'The Lord confides in those who fear him' and that is why taking counsel from other believers is as important a form of guidance as the others are. The word 'counsel' doesn't carry the professional air about it that we think of when we hear the word; but rather it basically means 'instruction'.

So God uses the instruction/counsel of his own people as a means of guiding and directing our lives. There are 4 things we need to know in this respect.

We are a Community of Counsellors

The church is a community of those whom God saves through Christ and then calls to offer grace and guidance to one another. The New Testament is replete with the 'one another' statements which describe the duty and responsibility which God places on us to love another (1 Peter 1. 22), forgive one another (Col 3. 13), serve one another (Gal 5. 13), submit to one another (Eph 5. 21), teach and admonish one another (Col 3. 16) and so on. By so doing, we are acting as a community who by our actions are expressing the will of God and therefore providing guidance from God as we seek to live for Jesus Christ. It is important

for us, as a community of counsellors, to be corporately involved in one another's lives. How else can we counsel?

We are Competent to do Counselling

We may not feel up to offering instruction and guidance but Paul, in **Romans 15:14**, asserts 'I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and *competent to instruct one another*'. The reason every believer is competent for this task is because we have the Holy Spirit who is the Great Counsellor (John 14. 16) and He guides and directs our lives as we seek the same for others. Imagine a set on stage and you have actors who are directed according to a script. You hear the cry, 'lights, camera, action!' and the scene unfolds. We are like actors, though not in a hypocritical way; we are tasked with living to a script (the Bible) and we have the Holy Spirit to direct us in offering counsel and guidance to one another. We cannot go off-script or ignore the Director or the whole story loses its direction and the plot and story line become distorted. So, we are competent to counsel and need to take that on board.

We must be Caring in Counselling

The 'one another's' of the New Testament are couched in the language of love and care, summarized by Gal 5. 13, 'serve one another in love'. As we offer guidance and advice and help it must be done with a caring and loving attitude and goal, asking ourselves, 'what is for this person's good? What will help them bring glory to God in their lives?', even if we offer a rebuke or warning. Ps 25. 10 says 'all God's ways are loving and faithful towards those who obey his commands' and so we ought to emulate our God in counselling.

We should be Committed to Counselling

As we are called to serve, forgive, love, submit, support one another, these commands often come to us in the sense of 'keep doing this'. An important doctrine we believe in is 'Perseverance of the Saints' which assures us that those who follow Jesus will keep doing so till they go to Glory! An important aspect of this is persevering in counselling and supporting one another. Gal 6. 9 says, 'let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest'. Guiding, supporting, instructing, counselling- all seeds sown which after rain and sunshine fall will result in growth and Glory to God!

Friends, keep counselling and instructing because by so doing we are playing a role in the guidance of God

Your friend and Pastor

Colin

Rev Colin MacLeod

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CONGRATULATIONS

To Rob and Sarah Maciver on the birth of their daughter Effie Ceit, born on 24th July, weighing 7lbs, 7ozs, a wee sister for Ewan, Seumas, Martha and Flora. 'The promise is to you and to your children' (Acts 2. 39)

Also congratulations to our daughter Rebekah, who got engaged to Neil Holmes recently. Please pray for them as they make plans for marriage.

Colin

KIRK SESSION NEWS

Office Bearers' Training

Office bearers and potential office bearers are undergoing Training to help in pastoral duties. We are also planning to have a number of office bearers studying the Certificate in Presbyterian Ministry Module through ETS. This can be done by Distance Learning and is designed for those who are to take office in a denomination such as the Free Church of Scotland. It involves a series of two-hour seminars where matters of Principle and Practice are explored.

Women's Visiting Team

A Women's Visiting team has been appointed to visit elderly/housebound women.

DEACONS' COURT NEWS

Creche

We are looking into relocating the Crèche from upstairs to downstairs, utilising the new office adjacent to the fellowship area. The DC have approved installing doors from the fellowship area into the main sanctuary for the purposes of retaining heat and hopefully this will provide a degree of sound proofing.

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

Congregational Fellowships

A new programme for Congregational Fellowships has been made us as follows.

August 27 th -	Rona Matheson (Blythswood)
September 24 th -	Linda Buchan (Highlands and Islands Youth For Christ)
October 29 th -	Harvest Thanksgiving Lunch and Praise after morning service
November 12 th -	Communion preacher
December 24 th -	Carol service (provisional)

Should anyone wish to be involved in a team that takes responsibility for the food on an evening then please do speak to Jessie.

Colin

Dates for the Diary

September

Sunday 3 rd	Sandy taking FN am service, Chris Davidson in Madras Street and Colin taking FN pm service
Monday 4 th	Guys gearing for Growth meeting in the Manse at 7.30pm
Tuesday 5 th	Office Bearers training in the Fellowship area at 7.30pm
Wednesday 6 th	Tumbletots in the hall from 10-11.30am and every week thereafter.
Thursday 7 th	Prayer round tables at 7.30pm in the hall
Friday 8 th	Office Bearers' prayer meeting in the Manse at 8am 3:16 Teens meet in the Manse from 6.30-8pm and every Friday thereafter. All teenagers welcome.

Saturday 9th Likely Dads in the hall from 10.30am to 12 noon and every 2nd and 4th Saturday thereafter

Sunday 10th Colin taking all 3 services
Isobel Fraser service at 3pm

Tuesday 12th Congregational lunch and devotional in the hall from 12.30 to 2pm. All very welcome
Office Bearers' training in the Fellowship area at 7.30pm

Friday 15th CYC Curry evening in the hall at 7pm

Sunday 17th Colin taking services in FN and Sandy taking MS service
Cameron house service at 3pm

Wednesday 20th Home Groups (Fruitfulness on the Front Line) at 7.30pm

Saturday 23rd Fund Raising Coffee Morning in hall from 10am-12noon

Sunday 24th Colin taking services in the FN and Darren taking MS service
Congregational Fellowship in hall 8pm- Linda Buchan (HIYFC)
Scottish Northern Convention in Castle Street Church, Dingwall

October

Sunday 1st Colin taking all 3 services

Tuesday 3rd Congregational lunch and devotional in the hall at 12.30pm in hall (note change of date). All welcome.
Guys Gearing for Growth in Manse at 7.30pm

Wednesday 4th Prayer round tables at 7.30pm in the hall

Thursday 5th Office bearers' prayer meeting at 8am in Manse

Sunday 8th Colin taking FN services and Donnie taking MS service
Isobel Fraser service at 3pm

Sunday 15th Colin taking FN services and Chris Macleod taking MS service
Cameron House service at 3pm

Sunday 22nd Sandy taking FN services and Darren taking MS service (Colin at communion in Kilmallie)

Wednesday 25th Home Groups (FOFL) at 7.30pm

Sunday 29th Colin taking FN services and Martin Maclean taking MS service
Harvest Thanksgiving, Fellowship and Praise after morning service

R2R

There are changes afoot with Road to Recovery. Owing to funding challenges and uncertainty with R2R, Martin Maclean decided to apply for and was successful in securing a job with HHT which he hopes to start at the beginning of October. Martin will be leaving his position on Friday 29th September. We thank Martin for his work in R2R and wish him every blessing in his new job. At present we have no plans to replace him but have made plans to offer support to existing service users and to continue the R2R Thursday night meeting.

Colin

20 Schemes

Following the assessment visit on Madras Street undertaken by Mez McConnel of 20Schemes, a report was submitted to the Kirk Session. It was agreed to accept the report and move forward with formulating a Partnership Agreement. 20Schemes proposed a Partnership with the Free North whose aim is to plant a church in Merkinch through *recruiting a church planter/family, a women's worker and at least one intern in order to move onto the estate and begin to gather a church planting team around them. The ministry would be a Free North church plant supported by 20schemes.* The Kirk Session appointed a Working Group which has been meeting and further discussing the partnership with Mez and with Rev Chris Davidson, a Free Church Minister and Church Planter trained by 20 Schemes during his time in Ministry in Edinburgh. The Church Planter is central in taking leading the plans forward.

The Deacons' Court and Kirk Session have agreed to proceed with a 20 Schemes Partnership and to employ Chris Davidson in a Church planter role. This will mean Chris will move into 39 Madras Street and be committed to recruiting a church planting team and gathering a core of people as a congregation with which to grow a church in Merkinch. More details will follow. In the meantime please do pray for this new and exciting venture.

Colin

Blythswood Shoebox Appeal

Once again it's the time of year to think about the Blythswood shoebox appeal. On the evening of October 31st the women's meeting will be given over to filling boxes for women, men, teenage girls and teenage boys.

We need donations of toiletries, stationery items, hats, scarves, gloves, socks, underwear, small household items and sweets (NOT chocolate and with a sell by date of at least March 2018) suitable for the groups listed above. (As in previous years we will not be filling boxes for children.) We would be delighted if the men could supply items for the men's boxes – especially tools (eg screwdrivers, pliers) and toiletries. Please see the leaflet on the notice board in the hall for full details.

To prepare for the evening we would be grateful if as many donations as possible be made over the next few weeks and by 22 October at the latest – there will be boxes or IKEA bags under the table in the kitchen for the items.

There will be two afternoon meetings - on Tuesday 26th September at 2pm when we will make a start on covering shoeboxes with wrapping paper and on Thursday 26th October at 2pm when we will continue with this task and start sorting the toiletries and stationery items. Both meetings are open to men and women. Then on Tuesday 31st October at 7pm the boxes will be filled. There will be time for chatting over tea and cake at all three meetings!!

Please make a note of the dates/times and come along to any or all of the meetings and please do donate items for the boxes which are so gratefully received by very needy folks in eastern Europe and in Pakistan. The Blythswood Chief Executive writes, "Your kindness brings unforgettable joy into the lives of people who feel left out" and reminds us of 1 John 3v18 "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

Jane Macleod.

Blythswood Vacancy - Fundraising Administrator

How would you like to join a prominent charity that works in the Highlands and around the world, transforming the lives of some of the most vulnerable of individuals, and be part of its incredible growth and success?

One of the team has been promoted internally, so a vacancy has arisen to join our Fundraising Team. This role supports the fundraising team by providing essential administration to ensure the highest possible standards of supporter care are delivered at all times. You will play a key role in our much loved annual Shoe Box Appeal. You will be highly organised, passionate about managing relationships and have excellent attention to detail. The position is for 37.5 hours per week, which will usually be Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00. We would consider a job-share. Sympathy for Blythswood Care's Christian ethos will help you communicate with our supporters.

For a job description and job description contact **Barbara Grace on 01349 830777** or e-mail personnel@blythswood.org. The closing date for completed applications is Thursday 21 September 2017. Interviews planned for week beginning Monday 2 October.

HELPFUL THOUGHTS

TIMES OF TRIAL

"Suffering IS a work of God."

"The time to trust is when all else fails. Great faith MUST have severe trials."

"It is in the acceptance of what is given that God gives Himself. This total loss, I may accept, and by accepting it I find in my hands something to offer."

"In our suffering, we learn that we must be lead by the will of The Father. Our temptation is to be lead by the sympathy of the crowd and take our eyes off Him. Let us not sin by falling into self pity, but to seek God's glory and our betterment."