

From the Manse

Dear friends,

Over the last number of months we've looked at the different ways God guides us. We reflected on *Commanding Scripture*, the *Compelling Spirit*, the *Counsel of the Saints*, *Common Sense* and I want to conclude this study with *Circumstantial Signs*.

I think it is important to remember that signs are a means of pointing us to Jesus. The first 11 chapters in John's Gospel revolve around the theme of seven signs which are given in order that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing we might be saved.

However, when it comes to guidance I think of signs in terms of the way circumstances fall out to point us in a certain direction. We don't look for a sign when we consider 'should I go to church?' because Scripture clearly says not to give up meeting together (Heb 10. 25), or when considering whether or not to sleep with your girlfriend or boyfriend or with someone else if you are married, because Scripture says 'the marriage bed should be kept pure' (Heb 13. 4). We needn't seek a sign when considering if we should seek to grow in love, joy, peace and so on, because that is the fruit that the Holy Spirit grows wants to grow in us; we would most likely 'phone a friend/seek saintly counsel' if we wanted advice on what car to buy if we knew our friend has the same car, and we would, no doubt, apply Christian reason if someone suggested that since we are so gifted at evangelism that we go to Tibet to evangelize the Buddhist population there, leaving behind our wife and family and job with no means of support!!

So, where do signs come in then? Well, usually when it comes to decisions that Scripture doesn't specifically touch on, the Spirit doesn't shed light on, or counsel is divided on, and even common sense doesn't help. Then we ask, 'please Lord, give me a sign'.

I want to think of 3 words when considering 'circumstantial signs'.

Providence: Proverbs 16. 9 says, 'In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps'. A foundational truth is that the Lord has it all planned out in advance. That ought not to make us complacent about seeking his will in certain things, but ought to free us from frantically looking for that 'sign' that indicates the direction to go in.

Promise: Psalm 37. 5 says 'Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this'. And what it means is this: if we're faced with a difficult decision, as all of us are from time to time, or sometimes very often, we can go to the Lord and say, 'Lord, I don't know which direction to go. I don't know whether this is right or whether that's right. I don't know whether this relationship is right or whether it's not. I don't know whether this job is right or whether it's not. I don't know whether this decision is right or whether it's not.' 'Commit your way to the Lord' — that's the first thing. Secondly, trust in him, and then his promise is this: 'he will act'. The Lord gave a sign to Abraham's servant when looking for a wife for his son Isaac when he asked (Gen 24. 12-14) and to Gideon when seeking confirmation of success in battle (Judges 6. 36-40). Trust the Lord's promise when you commit your way request to him!

Prudence: A great image of God's guiding by signs in the Bible is that of open and closing doors. We read in Acts 16. 7 how God shut the doors as Paul and his companions were trying to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit of the Lord would not allow them. That was the sign that this was not the way for them at this time, and they accepted that. No matter what they thought, felt, desired, wished for, the door was closed and so it was prudent for them to take this as a sign from God. But God also opens doors. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 16. 9 that 'a great door for effective work has opened for me' and Paul accepted that too and decided to remain where he was before moving on. In Revelation 3. 7-8, Jesus reminds the church in Philadelphia that he holds the keys to every door; what he opens no-one can shut and what he shuts no-one can open. We have to be willing to say, 'I trust you with this' when doors open and when doors close and progress with prudence seeking his will in our lives.

So, may we all know the Lord to be our God and Guide throughout our lives, and may he lead us in straight paths of righteousness, whatever that means for us as individuals, in order to glorify His name.

Your friend and Pastor

Colin

Rev Colin MacLeod

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Please remember the following people in your prayers –

Illnesses or Hospital

Miss Florence Williamson

Miss Olivia Ross

Housebound

Mrs Anna Cameron

Mrs Margaret Grant

Mrs Mary MacDonald

Mrs Effie MacIver

Mrs Christine MacRae

Residential Homes

Mrs Mary McCulloch – Aden House

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 & Mrs Barbara Morrison, Isobel Fraser Home

Mrs Ishbel Graham - Kingsmills Home

CONDOLENCES

David Lee passed away on Thursday 12th October aged 88 years. The funeral was on Saturday 21st October in the Free North with the interment in Kilvean cemetery afterwards. We extend our condolences to David, Alison and their respective families and commit them to the care and keeping of our God and Father in heaven

Colin

KIRK SESSION NEWS

The Session agreed to ask existing Home groups their views on having a group meet monthly in the church

DEACONS' COURT NEWS

The Court have agreed to the following over the last number of months:

- Expenditure to the sum of £6000 on 39 Madras Street, installing a new bathroom/shower upstairs, installing a new shower downstairs and new carpeting and vinyl throughout the house.
- Rental of a new colour photocopier at £42 per month
- Making and installing of doors for the Fellowship area at cost of £4500 plus VAT. This should be completed soon and should impact the issue of heat loss in that area.
- Work has been completed on converting the old lane toilet into a cleaning cupboard, making good the Bank St old toilet and repairing the toilet water heater at a cost of £2,000 plus VAT.
- A number of jobs carried out in the Manse including fixing outside and inside lights, rear toilet drain, bathroom splashboard, front door and carpet costing £1000

We are thankful for the givings of the congregation which enable us to meet our ongoing costs, to carry out these works and others, as well as meeting our financial obligations to Central Funds in Edinburgh which allows us to pay for a Minister and for Chris Davidson (Church Planter). May the Lord continue to bless us by providing in the way He does.

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

Kidzone

This activity has recommenced and is now run by Darren and Nicola with support and input from others. Many thanks to Brian Cameron who ran the group beforehand. Darren writes on Facebook:

Wow...what a night last night! 17 kids came along, a few new faces, where we enjoyed some games, and a short talk from Nicola who spoke about Jesus and the woman at the well, and we learnt that although the water at the well is refreshing and good and keeps us hydrated, however, Jesus offers us a different type of water, a living water! And how the Bible tells us we'll never thirst again if we accept the living water, Jesus. Jesus offers us the water of life, giving eternal life to those who believe in Him.

What a great night seeing the kids so happy, and really interested in the talk, and listened well.

So please do keep this group in your prayers, asking the Lord to save these young souls.

Colin

Dates for the Diary

November

Wednesday 1st

Prayer round tables in the hall at 7.30pm

Thursday 2nd

Office Bearers' Prayer meeting at 8am in the Manse

Kidzone meets in the Hall weekly from 6-7pm for kids aged 4-11

Sunday 5th

Colin taking services in the FN and Darren in MS

Friday 10th

Testimony night in the hall at 7.30pm

Saturday 11th

Likely Dads meet in the Hall from 10.30am to 12noon every 2nd and 4th Saturdays

Communion prep service in the hall at 7.30pm taken by Calum Macmillan, Rosskeen Free Church

Sunday 12th

Calum Macmillan taking services in FN and Donnie Macleod in MS

Isobel Fraser service at 3pm

Wednesday 15th

Home Groups at 7.30pm

Thursday 16th

R2R group meets in the Hall at 7.30pm and weekly thereafter

Sunday 19th

Colin taking FN services

Cameron House service at 3pm

Sunday 26th

Colin taking FN services

December

Sunday 3rd

Colin taking FN services

Tuesday 5th

GGG in the Manse at 7.30pm

Wednesday 6th

Prayer round tables in the Hall at 7.30pm

Thursday 7th

Office Bearers' prayer meeting in the Manse at 8am

Sunday 10th

FN services taken by Chris Macleod (am) and Ronnie Philipps (pm). Colin preaching in Kiltarlity
Isobel Fraser service at 3pm

Wednesday 13th Home Groups meet at 7.30pm
Sunday 17th Colin taking FN services.
Induction of new Office Bearers at morning service
Cameron House service at 3pm
Sunday 24th Carol service at 6.30pm
Sunday 31st Colin taking FN services.

January 2018

Monday 1st New Year's Day service at 11am

MADRAS STREET MISSION

As from the **13th November**, all services operating from or in Madras Street Hall and House will cease for a time during which plans and preparations will be made for the launch of a church plant in Merkinch. Personal contact has been made and letters given to all users explaining the situation. Chris Davidson has also been meeting with people who have attended Madras Street over the years and who may wish to commit to making it their church once it is launched as such. Those who do not wish for this have been encouraged to attend the Free North or some other church of their choice.

Heartfelt thanks are extended to all those who have contributed in any way to the work and witness of Madras Street over the years. May the seeds sown take root and bear fruit through the new venture!

Chris will move in once remedial works have been carried out on the house. Updates on plans and progress will be given by Chris on a regular basis over the coming months.

Colin

R2R

The weekly Road to Recovery meeting will now take place in the Free North Hall at 7.30pm, access by the Church Street entrance. Contact numbers for anyone seeking support/advice continue to be 07918 775368 or 715809

Colin

OTHER NEWS

Acclaim at Christmas

We are hosting the Acclaim choir for a Christmas Concert on Saturday 9th December at 7.30pm.

There will be an opportunity to sing and listen to songs such as Immanuel, Candlelight Carol, Child in the Manger, I will sing Praise and He shall Reign Forevermore.

Come along and invite your friends. Entrance is by ticket which is free but a collection for Macmillan Cancer Support will be taken on the night. Help with Stewarding and Catering will be required.

Sandy

Blythswood Inverness Support Group - Annual Quiz Night – Friday, 27 October:

Many thanks to all those who supported this event: Colin as our excellent quizmaster, our team (Rona, Jessie, Sandy and Stuart) and all who came along to encourage our team. Kingsview were the winners this year, with the Free North coming joint second, with three other church teams! The amount raised was £900 and this will go towards our project for this year - the building work at the Daniel Centre in Romania.

Archie Fraser/Cathel Innes/Murina Anderson

Highland Foodbank

The Highland Foodbank has had an overwhelming response to their harvest appeal and they would like to thank the Free North congregation for their part in it. As the Free North has given so generously to the harvest appeal, they don't expect us to respond to the current appeal, but if you would like to donate anything via the blue box at the lane door, the following items would be welcome during November/December.

- Tins of ham
- Packets of rice
- Cream crackers
- Long-life fruit juice
- Toilet rolls.

Calman Trust – Volunteer Opportunity

The Calman Trust have contacted us with a request for volunteers. The trust works with young people to provide support with employability training, life skill learning and independent living. They are looking for a number of volunteers just now to share a variety of skills and interests in sessions with young people. If you can spare a few hours a week to help with cooking sessions, practical workshops or with their Ness Soaps productions, you can get in touch with Calman Trust as below. A poster with details is at each door.

Email:	food@calman.org
Phone: Calman Trust:	01463 248630
Phone or text: Volunteer Co-ordinator:	07773 750289

Prayer for Council

The following letter was circulated to Ministers in the Highland Council area:

“As a concerned Christian and recent campaign manager for the Highland Council elections, I have met with and talked to several members of the Highland Council, who felt that specific prayer back up would be appreciated especially over difficult debates and decisions. In order to facilitate this a website has been set up where people can sign up to receive prayer requests from council – this can be found at at <https://www.prayerforcouncil.co.uk>

As it covers the Local Authority area it is strategic in nature. Bulletins will not be long and detailed, rather they will include a few points each month noting the main committee meetings that are on, and any specific requests Councillors have made regarding difficult / important decisions.

It will be a-political in nature, not represent any political views or opinions. Rather it will inform people of important meetings and decisions to be made. It will not tell or advise people how to pray, it will just ask them to pray for the right decisions to be made. It is mainly to form a prayer shield for Council and to ensure that Councillors have prayer support from as many people as possible.

With this in mind, I would like to ask if you would be willing to make this known to your congregation, and also if anyone in your congregation would be willing to be a contact, who could regularly update your prayer meeting. If so could you please forward me their email address. Additionally, I noticed when collating email addresses, a few of you are interim moderators for another congregation, I would appreciate if you feel there is a more appropriate person to deal with this, particularly for these churches, if you would

forward this email on to the relevant person. If you would like any further information about this initiative, please let me know.”

Kind Regards
Anne Sikorski
anne@annesikorski.com

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Why?

19 years ago, that was the question I was asking myself, as I lay in my hospital bed. Even now, I still wonder why. Why, so suddenly, was my life turned completely upside down, as the result of a life threatening and life changing car accident.

As a young Christian (3 months old), it didn’t make sense. But as time went on, things started to make more sense, and I started to realise that God was in control and He had a plan for me. Now, looking back, I can see how God was in control and He was bringing good from it. But I still ask the question, “Why”? I’ve held on to this little poem since I was in hospital, that someone sent me. It’s entitled “why?”.

Why?

*Wisdom is not knowing all the answers to the problems of each day.
Not knowing why this has happened to me and not to someone else.
Not soaking up all the knowledge this world can offer, but knowing that behind the whole of life, for now and evermore, God is sovereign and, though I may not understand, he is working to make us each according to his plan.
If we ask, there is an answer to each problem, though it may not be the one we want to hear.
Believe your God will take your hand if you allow.
Let him guide your every step, and when you feel unsure, believe that he knows best.*

Anonymous

There are some things that we may never know why, but we can believe and trust God that He is in control.

Martin

HELPFUL THOUGHTS

Those who walk with God always reach their destination.”

“So don’t close the Book when hard things happen to you. Turn the page and begin a new chapter. After all, God is the only reason you made it this far.”

“Be assured that no matter how dark it looks, no matter how long it feels, God will finish what He started. The hardest test is the patience to wait for that right moment.”

“God has perfect timing, never early never late

It may take a little patience, and a lot of faith

But it’s ALWAYS worth the wait!”