

31st December 2021

Direction

**“All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony, not understood;
All partial evil, universal good.”**

Alexander Pope, An Essay on Man, Epistle 1

A few weeks before Christmas, I got together with a group of ministers for reflection. At one point, we shared images to describe “how you feel just now” – nearly two years on from the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and thinking about our ministry in the Church. And we looked beyond Christmas to the dawn of a New Year too. The images were interesting and informative. One minister felt he was untangling a set of Christmas lights which, no matter how carefully he’d put them away last year, had come out in a jumble, and he didn’t know where to start. Another said she was a chameleon on a Christmas tree, not sure how she was going to adapt, struggling with many conflicting surroundings, clinging on, motionless, trembling, with eyes darting this way and that – and waiting.

For myself, and echoing several recent conversations, I was standing beside the signpost at John o’ Groats, with its many arms pointing to all corners of the world, giving clear directions and measurable distances. I was planning to have my photo taken beside the signpost at the most northerly point of Scotland, but it had blown over in the wind and was lying forlornly on the ground. With the help of others, I was setting it up straight again. But I wasn’t sure about its orientation, and whether it was pointing in the right way. The signpost was intact. But the directions were uncertain.

As I stand on the cusp of 2022, I look again at my signpost. It’s been blown down several times in this past year, but it’s never been broken. I’m hauling it into place again – and now it’s my job to orientate it so it’s pointing me in the right direction. I trust my signpost. It’s never let me down before, and I know it will do its job again. Now, all I have to do is to make sure I can trust the direct it points to before I travel on into 2022.

Happy Hogmanay, and all the best for the New Year when it comes – whichever direction it takes you.

A prayer for today

Right! That’s the signpost up! AND pointing in the right way. So, I’m off ... Amen

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