

He restores my soul

Dear Friends

The beginning of a new year is an opportunity to take stock of where we're at and where we're going. Often we cannot see the way ahead. It is then especially that we need to 'put our hand into the hand of God.' ***"He guides me along the right paths, bringing honour to his name,"*** or, as another translation puts it, ***"He is true to his name."*** The older version also has a deep attraction: ***"He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."*** Righteousness isn't a word that we hear very often these days, and when we do encounter it, it seems to carry with it negative connotations, because we are thinking about self-righteousness, one of the most subtle snares that the people of God can fall into. Righteousness, in the biblical sense, is something very different, and is one of the chief characteristics of the being of God. It refers to right relationships and is a crucial prerequisite to any forward movement of the Spirit. Right relationships are what pave the way for God to come. At the end of Psalm 85, which is a psalm about restoration, there are these words, ***"Righteousness goes as a herald before him, preparing the way for his steps."*** When you think about it, broken or wounded, or non-existent relationships are the source of most of what we call sin, broken relationships with other groups in society, in church, in political or socio-economic systems, broken relationships between nations, between the two thirds and one third worlds, broken relationship with the created order and even the severance of relationship or wholeness within our own inner beings that leads us to sometimes react or do things that run counter to what is good, what is of God. Our whole raison d'être as we walk this restoration road is the restoring of right relationships. And we can only point others in that direction if we ourselves are seeking to walk in the paths of righteousness, to be guided along the

right paths. We can't do this on our own. We would very soon end up in a cul de sac, or take a wrong turning, simply because we are part of a broken humanity. It is God who leads us along this road. Why? He does it because he is true to his name. He is the God of righteousness, of right relationships, and he cannot be false to himself. It is the way he has to travel, or else he wouldn't be God. It is the way he travelled in Jesus, and he asks us to come with him.



This is absolutely fundamental to our journey of faith. It is one of the non-negotiables in the criteria for following. Think what a powerhouse we would, under God, become if we began to give this the place of prime importance that he indicates it should have. How things would change in Ireland, among our politicians, between the different Christian denominations, and so much else. This 'activity' is what brings honour to the name of Jesus, and

when we enter such a field, then we are, however stumblingly, being true to the name of Jesus who came to restore our relationship with God and with each other. When I dwell on that thought, I find it overwhelming and awesome. It's the key to so much else that I wonder why more people haven't grasped the significance of the mighty tool that they have within their reach. If we are not bringing honour to the name of Jesus in this way, then we're not really on the road at all. I suppose if we were asked to give a short answer as to why we are on the road we could answer, in the words of this psalm: ***"It's for his name's sake."***

May this road 'rise to meet you' in 2006.

Ruth

Open House
every Wednesday
from 12 - 2.00 p.m.
All welcome

OVERSEAS FRIENDS



My name is Pat Kelly. I'm a missionary priest from Belfast and am presently based with the American Province of the Society of African Missions (SMA) in Tenafly, New Jersey. The SMA is an international group of missionary priests and lay associates dedicated to the spread of the Gospel in Africa.

My first mission was in Liberia, West Africa (5 years). Since then my ministry has been to recruit and train new missionaries for Africa from around the world as well as raising funds for this work. I have worked in Ireland (5 years), Philippines (5 years), India (12 years), Rome (2 years) and now USA. I praise God for the many and varied experiences in each of these places.

While in Liberia in the mid-70's a man asked me (he had just heard news of some atrocity in N. Ireland) why I didn't stay at home to preach to the people there about how to live a Christian life. It was a good question. I told him that I believed the Lord had called me to Africa and that He calls others to do this work in Ireland. However, from that moment I began to seriously pray each day for my homeland and for those men and women who were struggling to bring the Christian message of love, forgiveness and reconciliation to a divided community who often didn't want to hear it.

My prayer for N. Ireland became focused in a special way about 1990 when I met Ruth Patterson and heard of her vision for restoration and renewal in N. Ireland. I have been a part of the Restoration Ministries "overseas family" since then. The journey of RM is not just for N. Ireland. It is a journey that must be made in every corner of the Lord's harvest where people are trapped by blinkered visions (for whatever reason) of themselves and their neighbours which prevent them from coming together and reaching their true potential as children of God... whether it be tribal divisions in Africa, social distinctions in Philippines, caste tensions in India, race problems in USA or whatever. The Good Samaritan's journey from Jerusalem to Jericho is one we all have to make (Lk.10:30-37). Being a member of the RM family and sharing their journey, even from a distance, has been a great blessing in my life.

RM House is a special place of warmth and welcome where hospitality is taken seriously. I always look forward to visiting when I am on home leave. I appreciate the many times it has opened its doors to facilitate my meeting with large groups of family and friends. It's like a calm, friendly harbour where I can moor my ship for a brief time to refresh and be renewed among friends before I cast off into the deep again. I really feel I "belong" there. I am not a stranger.

I am aware of your mid-day prayer each day for all of us – and sometimes I work out the time difference and light a candle at the same time wherever I happen to be, and join you in spirit. This year I will try to do this more often and put each of you and your important ministry before the Lord in prayer. Thank You RM community!

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Dates For Your Diary



Monthly Meeting

Monday 30th January
at 8.00 pm



Difficult Conversations

Thursday 9th February
at 8.00 pm

FORGIVENESS