



Dear Friends,

It is always good at the turn of the year to take a little while to pause and reflect. How have we journeyed through the year that has passed? Where are we standing at this present moment? Does the way ahead seem clear to us or is it still shrouded in mystery? What are your dreams for yourself, for the people who are dear to you, for this world that seems to be overshadowed more than ever by the dark clouds of depression, oppression, anxiety, war, injustice and amorality? Is there a vision that is beckoning you, even though, as yet, it may not be very clearly defined? I'm not referring to New Year resolutions that inevitably end up as hope-destroyers when we find, after a few weeks, that we cannot keep the pace and they fall by the wayside. There's nothing wrong with resolutions in themselves. They can be very helpful, but the thing about them is that generally it is we who decide what they shall be and, by and large, we rely on our own strength to accomplish whatever it is we have resolved to do. The fear of failure can then stalk our path, sometimes predetermining the end result. Dreams and visions, on the other hand, tend to be 'given.' The challenge is to be alert enough to recognise them and courageous enough or trusting enough to take them on board. If, after a period of testing and discernment, we allow ourselves to be grasped by them, there comes a mysterious kind of 'knowing' that we are not on our own, that, even although they may seem to have come from deep within us, there is also, paradoxically, a sense that they have come from outside of us, that they are bigger than we are and that their origins are in the heart of God himself. With that knowl-

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edge there comes a renewed confidence that, no matter what obstacles lie in the way, God will fulfil his purposes and, if we respond by cooperating with him, we are much closer to falling into the category of those who are identified by their unyielding hope and their pilgrim hearts.

Restoration Ministries has reached its twentieth birthday and at a time away together in September our Directors, Management Team, staff and volunteers were grasped by the vision of a 'sabbath year' – that, at least until the end of the summer of 2009, we would not start anything new but rather take time to be restored, to give thanks for the harvest so far, and have space to be open and to listen for the dreams and visions, in other words, to discern His will for us as a ministry up ahead. This does not mean that everything will close down. It is important that our opportunities to meet together once a month continue, that we continue to communicate, through our regular newsletters, with our friends around the world, that we are encouraged in our reflection through a couple of quiet retreat days, possibly in Lent and at Pentecost. Prayer ministry will be ongoing, as resources are available, as will our Wednesday Prayer and the House will still be open for use by other organisations. It sounds as if everything will still be going on as normal.

I suppose the big difference is that I myself will be taking advantage of the Sabbath time to have what I can only describe as a semi-sabbatical

He restores my soul

during the months of February, April and May in order to concentrate on writing and other things, including listening for the dreams and waiting for the vision. I know that you will join with me and for me in prayer during this time.

Over the last few weeks several people who have dared to dream over the last long years and have risked running with the vision have left us to become more fully a part of the communion of saints. We give thanks to God for the lives of Kathleen Davey and John Morrow, both so deeply committed to the work and witness of the Corrymeela Community and whose absence will be felt so keenly. We stand somewhat in awe at the remarkable, inspiring and quiet work, all done out of his love for God and his deep commitment to bridge building, of our own dear member of our Board of Directors, Terry Donaghy who died suddenly on the Feast of the Epiphany while attending a prayer vigil for peace for the Middle East in the centre of the city he loved and served

with great humility, cheerfulness and integrity. We will miss him greatly, especially his wonderful gift of encouragement.

There aren't too many certainties around these days but, for me, the biggest one is simply that 'God is.' He is the source of our hope, our confidence, our celebration, our life. At this time of year, I often turn to the old words that will be familiar to many of you: 'I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, "Give me a light that I may travel safely into the unknown." And he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."'

So dare to dream, be full of hope, risk the untrodden path – and may 2009 be blessed for all of you.

Ruth

We give thanks for two 'friends' of Restoration Ministries who died recently

Our dearly valued 'friend' and Director Mr Terry Donaghy died suddenly on Tuesday 6th Jan. while attending a vigil in Belfast for the people of Gaza. Terry was very committed to the peace process in Northern Ireland and will be sadly missed by all who knew him. We extend our sincere sympathies to his family circle.

Our esteemed 'friend' and supporter Mr TBF Thompson died in early January. We are very grateful to the TBF Thompson Trust for all the support they have given to Restoration Ministries and would like to extend our sincere sympathies to his wife Betty and his family circle.

IMPORTANT DATES

Monthly Meeting
Monday 26th Jan
at 8.00pm
Title: As We Forgive

Lenten
Reflection Day
Saturday 7th March
2.00 - 6.00 pm

CONTACT DETAILS

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