

# Restoration Ministries



He Restores My Soul  
February 2012

*Dear Friends,*

We are fast approaching the season of Lent. As I've sought to reflect on this sacred time, I have been reminded so forcibly of the disciples on the night before the crucifixion. After the euphoria of the healings, the teaching, the miracles, the heightening expectancy, culminating in the triumphal entry, somewhere in the peripheral shadows menacing shapes begin to appear, shapes that they either cannot or will not understand. They welcome the security, the hospitality, the familiarity of the upper room and the age old words of Passover, initially soothing the insidious unease and the frayed nerves that lurking fear and doubt provoke. At one point Jesus even says to them, "Oh, there is so much more I want to tell you, but you cannot bear it now." But when their dulled senses are jolted by the mind blowing new twist put on the Passover liturgy by Jesus, then the wild beasts from the margins slowly begin to take centre stage. Even so, the disciples' loyalty and love are strong enough to accompany him into the night, even to the place of anguish in the garden. It is there that they are overwhelmed – by exhaustion, grief, fear – and they fall asleep. They cannot watch with him. They cannot share his anguish. The word anguish comes from the Latin *angustus* which means narrow or constricted. So anguish is the pain of a soul confined and restricted. They cannot bear to enter the pain of a God who chooses to be in such a place when he could have called on legions of angels for protection and vindication. Unable to stand under, understand the depth, length, breadth and height of such love, they seek an escape route from what is too much for them and are seduced by sleep. Three times it happens and then the opportunity to pick up the challenge of "Stay awake and pray" is gone. The 'wild beasts' assume human form in the presence of the armed mob sent by the religious leaders and headed by Judas. All that is left for the friends of Jesus is to run away. Awareness comes as a postscript to this night of horror and, perhaps ironically, puts them in a place of anguish, the narrow, constricted space of grief, fear, guilt, regret and shame. Thank God there is another postscript, a PPS that no power in heaven or earth or hell will ever be able to erase, a post script of forgiveness requested because of lack of awareness - and granted - a postscript of wild beasts vanquished and death defeated, a post script in the shape of a cross, a cross that says, "P.S. I love you."

Could it be that it has all been too much for us – these last years so full of so many negative emotions that are at war with what we profess to believe, what we hope for? We don't know what the future holds, but it can look very menacing. Do we retreat to the familiarity and security of what we have always known, even although we can almost physically sense it slipping from us and we are powerless to drag it back? Have we been so unaware or have we over-indulged in wishful thinking that we will find this present darkness of economic recession, global insecurity and disenchantment with the Church, to be merely a bad dream, that we have missed out on what Jesus would say to us? He knows we could not bear it – and yet my spirit would cry out, "Lord, what is it that you feel we could not bear? Have we not yet grown up enough that you can share more with us, maybe that 'more' that is vital for the sake of the world, the Church, Ireland?" We are on a journey and God is a God of revelation. He reveals to us, if we are awake and listening, through the Spirit of Truth that which we need to know for

**LENTEN REFLECTION DAY**

**A TIME FOR BEING**

**SAT FEBRUARY 25, 2012  
2.00pm – 5.30pm**

**ST. BRIGID'S HALL**

**ALL WELCOME**

**FACILITATOR**

**RUTH PATTERSON**

the living of these days. He knows we can't receive it all at once. It would be too much. But the relentless questions remain, "What is our state of wakefulness? How high is our awareness? Could it be that although, as the friends of Jesus, that is the Church in all its branches, we have been willing to go with him a certain distance into the night but then have become so confused and overwhelmed that we have fallen asleep?" And in so doing we have put ourselves in that narrow constricted space, the place of anguish.

Thank God for Spring, for resurrection and for new beginnings. As we seek to be in a state of wakefulness this Lent, may we all reach Easter Day with a renewed and joyous conviction that the same mighty power that raised Jesus from death is still at work in today's world and because it is, all is well and the best is yet to be. On another note, I am so conscious of and encouraged by the prayer support from you, the friends of Restoration Ministries. Since our 'move' I have done a lot of travelling and speaking in many different parts of Ireland, in France, in Rome and next week to Toronto for L'Arche Ontario. I am humbled and greatly encouraged by the many doors that are opening and know that I can only respond because I do so from a steady, faithful, loving base here in Belfast and reliance on your prayers. I thank you and I thank God.

We are still being greatly blessed by our sojourn here in St. Brigid's. We will let you know when our circumstances change and we 'up camp' for a more permanent residence, but for now – thanks be to God. May you know the accompaniment of the Beloved throughout Lent and arrive at a Joyous Easter.

## *Ruth*

### **Meeting the Women in the Bible**

**March 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th**

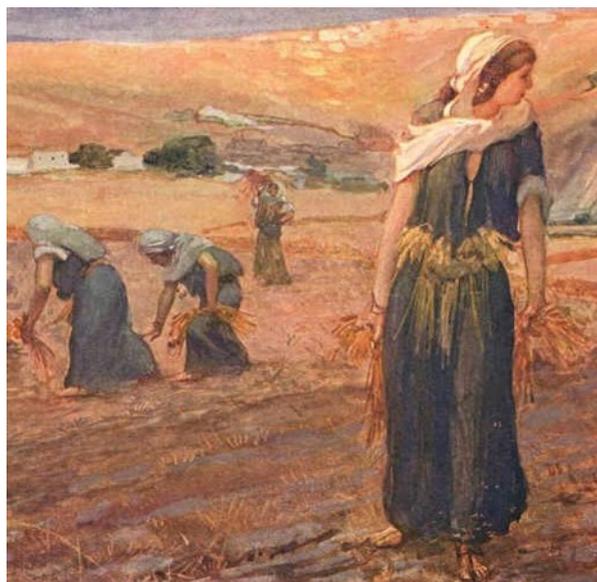
A series of lectures for Lent on the four Wednesday evenings in March conducted by Rev Ruth Patterson, in 40 Derryvolgie Ave at 7.45pm. Together we will reflect on themes of: pilgrimage, inclusion, unity and belovedness as they are portrayed through women in scripture.

**Our 12 noon prayer remains the focus of each day.**

**Our Wed. Prayer continues  
12 noon - 2.00 pm**

**Open hospitality Mon/Wed/Thurs  
from 10.00 am - 4.00 pm**

**ALL WELCOME**



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