

Dear friends,

There is a quality about the months of July and August and the seasonal rhythm of rest and restoration that speak to us as we put the breaks on the busyness of life in all the forms that this might take for each one of us.

Some of us might be preparing for a holiday away, and some for a holiday at home – perhaps a bit of both, but wherever we are and whatever we are going to be doing, the invitation is to slow down and to be more gentle with ourselves, to slow down and breathe....

I wonder how easy you find slowing down – stopping even – so that the natural rhythm of the seasonal natural life – the flowers and forna – the birds and the bees – and the lapping of the seas can wash over you and bring you back down to earth literally, so that the ground beneath your feet really does begin to feel holy and grounded in the holiday we naturally need to be replenished before we resiliently prepare to walk into the season of harvesting and autumnal preparations so that we can walk into the other seasonal slow-time of winter when we spend more time indoors as the colours hazy and balmy light of the summer begins to wane....

This has painted an almost idyllic way that seasonal signposts work to help us listen to our physical bodily demands naturally calling us to rest – our emotional demands naturally calling us to live in the moments of slow-time and to be mindful of the more natural surrounds of our life – and our spiritual longings for peace and rest, and space to be present to the season in its fullness, whatever that might be. But, of course, it isn't like that for so many – not just here in this country but everywhere...

For some, there is no choice but to live constantly in alert-busyness in order to feed the children – to survive amidst the trauma of conflict – of abuse - of lack of food and water or other sorrows of the world – there is no time to step back to rest and relax mind, body and soul in these places some might find themselves caught up in – and actually, perhaps some of us are living here right now in the busyness of one or more of these heavy weights of burden in some shape or form...

And it is at this point that I would like to encourage us all to remember the words of Jesus speaking to a group of friends who were, or who had been lost in the busyness and burden of their world back then – ‘Come to me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest....’ (Matt 11:28-30)

So as we stand back and pause, let us rest in the spirit of those encouraging and comforting words of Jesus. Living on our own strength and control can be exhausting – whatever the season – but the ‘yoke’ that Jesus refers to here is the double-yoke used for two oxen pulling the weight together. Jesus is saying to us that we are not alone – he carries the yoke of life with us together like the oxen – and he will bear the load while we take that much-needed rest, drawing strength from the peace and calm of God's spirit within us that we experience when we hand over our burdens and responsibilities in trust and faith that we *are* held and supported and that we *can* literally ‘Let go and let God’..... May you find gentle rest this summer-holiday season.

Blessings and love, Jacqueline