

4<sup>th</sup> December 2021

## Restoration

**“Not heroics but healing; not nostrums but normalcy;  
not revolution but restoration.”**

*Warren G Harding, Speech at Boston, 1920*

I shared thoughts with you some months ago about a trip across Europe with a band of intrepid workers heading to a friend’s restoration project in Tuscany. There was much work to be done to make a ruined farmhouse habitable, as well as clearing the dense undergrowth round the property where my friend wanted to plant new vines. Three things stay with me ...

The first was the hard work. I was foreman of the “clearing squad”, and with chainsaws, axes and pruning tools we were tasked with getting the overgrown terraces back to “normalcy”. The second was the restoration of the pizza oven. Built into the back wall of the farmhouse, the pizza oven hadn’t been used for years. But by the end of the week, it was working. Friday was “pizza night”. It was magical! Two dozen of us on a warm Tuscan evening, enjoying a pizza of our choice – and much wine – and celebrating what we’d achieved. And the third was the “planting ceremony” when our host gathered us together while the first vine was carefully placed in the ground. We’d done it! We’d invested so much in that little vine. It was a metaphor for our hopes and dreams.

As we come through this Covid pandemic – and, in recent days, having to cope with a “new variant” – in families, communities, churches, country, and globally, and seek to make Christmas what we wish it to be, this is a restoration project like no other. There has been much work to do, clearing and fixing, planning and restoring. We’ve invested time and toil to bring it to fruition. We’re doing it together, clearing the undergrowth, fixing the house, mending the oven, sharing the pizzas and wine, together enduring the pain and celebrating the successes. So now we will plant new vines, fragile, gentle beginnings, in which we will see our purpose, our hopes and our dreams.

Restoration matters. “Not heroics, but healing”. The hard work we’ve been committed to, and the togetherness we create, *will* bring us to the hope – even the fragile hope – we need for a restored and better future.

### **A prayer for today**

*Restore me, Lord, that I might bring restoration and healing to others. Amen*