January 2015

Dear Friends,

Welcome to 2015. I wonder how well you are doing in keeping those New Year resolutions. Whilst I am sure that my GP would wish that I was sticking rigidly to a new regime of plenty of exercise, healthy diet and generally stress-free living, I will have long failed by the time Reflections is published. I am more like the poor man who decided to make only resolutions this year he could keep. He resolved to gain weight, to stop exercising, to read less and watch more TV, to procrastinate more, to quit giving money and time to charity, and to never make New Year's resolutions again!

Maybe he's onto something. Why torture ourselves when we never keep those resolutions more than a week anyway?

What we need, of course, is not another resolution, but a revolution. We need a turning point in our lives. Like the wise travellers of old, we need to catch a glimpse of a guiding light, and we need to follow that light to a new life in Christ.

There is a scene in the wonderful film Apollo 13 where astronaut Jim Lovell is asked if he was ever afraid. He said that he had been afraid many times but one time sticks out in his memory.

He was returning from a combat mission and couldn't find his aircraft carrier. It was dark, and because they were under combat conditions, the carrier didn't have its lights on. His radio navigation equipment was of no use because they were under total radio silence to avoid enemy detection. In a last attempt to determine his location, he turned on his map light to see if he could calculate his position. Suddenly an electrical short caused all of the lights to go out.

It was then that he saw it. In the darkness there was a luminescent glow. It was the glow of sea plankton that is generated by the wake of a ship as it passes through. All he had to do was follow this glowing sea plankton, like a "highway" to the ship. He said, "You don't know what will transpire to lead you home. If the map light had not shorted out, I would never have seen the glowing wake."

Listen now to the words of Isaiah: "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and his glory shall be seen upon you."

"Arise, shine!" says the prophet. What a great thought to begin a new year. Don't shrink back from the coming year. Don't hide in the shadows. Walk boldly. Arise, Shine! Follow the light that brings you to Jesus and you will shine with his compassion, peace, joy, hope and love. A revolution indeed!

Nicola, Cameron and Ross thank you for all your good and kind wishes at Christmas and join me in sending you greetings for 2015, wishing you health, happiness and peace.

Russell J Furley-Smith