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from Garth...

**Hello again and warmest greetings for the New Year.**

Gill and I are at present down in Durban, South Africa with our son Tom and his wife Mandi (Bulelwa), and of course the three grandchildren Sabelo, Siyanda and Sesethu. It has been lovely to catch up with Tom's new project **Surfers Not Streetchildren**.

If you want to know a little more about this have a look at a video BA made about the work Tom is doing - [you can find it here](#)

In an earlier letter I said I would talk a little more about the songs on the new album **Something for the Soul. You'll Lead Me Home** is the one I wrote after my bout with cancer. Soon after, when I was recovering, I spoke with a friend Sheila MacGregor, and she said "I'm sure you wrote some interesting things whilst you were



recovering." I said "No I didn't." She said, "I'm sure you've written some songs," and I said, "No I haven't." I think she was a bit disappointed - I decided I ought to reflect one or two thoughts and so I wrote a prayer called **Convalescence - You Were There**, and a song on the new album called **You'll Lead Me Home**. (Sheila gets a mention in the album notes for sparking off the song!)

I talked to my producer Kevin Duncan about this song quite early on, and said - this is a keyboard song, particularly with Hammond organ - Kevin had the right feel for it straight away. And **Beth Rowley** joined me on the song - it's really a duet with her. Beth has a great voice and people keep asking me, who is that singing with you on this album!

When I was in hospital I was on the cancer ward at Barts in London, and many people were grappling with all sorts of very difficult circumstances. Sometimes I would hear people weeping in the night. It gradually dawned on me that I was grateful for the sense of companionship - in a very quiet way I sensed the presence of God and probably would have kept quiet about it if Sheila hadn't nudged me. In the song I say "You were my companion, though we didn't talk too much," and I think that was true, a bit like Willie Nelson's song saying "I was too sick to pray."

So here is a prayer about my convalescence.

## Convalescence - you were there

At 5 o'clock in the morning I couldn't lie there any longer –  
The pain and discomfort was too much,  
So I went downstairs and sat in the only chair that gave me comfort,  
And read Thomas Merton.  
I sat, read, and pondered, and watched the dawn come up.

I miss those times – they were unique in my life –  
Times of prayer, meditation, sometimes just sitting.  
I could tell you the exact time of dawn, and Thomas Merton came alive,  
And you were there – I never doubted in hospital or in convalescence  
You were there.  
We didn't talk much, more silence and pondering,  
But it was companionable, and you were there.

I want to thank you – I never thought I'd be grateful for it, but I am.  
Grateful that the cancer was caught early,  
Grateful that it stopped my busyness,  
Grateful for the dawns of meditation, for the 5 o'clock wake up call,  
Grateful that I had to stop,  
Grateful we only need one kidney,  
Grateful I could take you for granted.  
And convalescence can be a hard road,  
One step forward and two back or is it two steps forward and one back,  
Listening to my body, battling with the unexpected.  
You were there.  
We didn't talk much, but you were there.  
Thank you, my companion.



## Prayer for the New Year

Last year was a difficult year as we looked around the world at all the violence - on the new album several times I am trying to reflect the Christian commitment to non-violence following in the footsteps of Jesus.

So warmest good wishes and let's pray that 2015 is a year of more hope and more justice and more peace, because the way of militarism and inequality is rejected and the way of love for neighbour and hope is embraced.



Everloving God it is a new year full of new opportunities

As we ask forgiveness for the past

And make resolutions for the future

**May we show your love and live your way**

May we take time to pause and draw strength

And let our souls catch up

And be refreshed regularly through this year

**May we show your love and live your way**

May we remember the poor and the forgotten

The marginalized and the weak

And find ways to show your compassion

**May we show your love and live your way**

May the healing hope of the gospel be integral to our lives

So that the ways of justice and peace are reflected in us

**May we show your love and live your way**

May we take time to see the beauty of your world -

To see the beauty of trees, flowers, birds and animals -

To cherish them and work for the sustaining of our garden home -

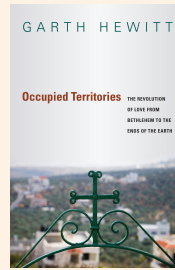
So that we leave it in a good state for generations to come  
**May we show your love and live your way**

May our hearts be refreshed by joy, music, creativity, love and hope  
So we in turn can bring hope and joy to others.  
**Throughout this year may we show your love  
and live your way.**

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Garth has made a meditational film clip of **You'll Lead Me Home**, with lyrics, for  
use in worship or personal reflection - [you can find it here](#)

You can buy Garth's album **Something for the Soul** or his book **Occupied Territories, the Revolution of Love from Bethlehem to the Ends of the Earth**, by clicking on their images below



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