In the main room of the lodge at Restoration Village is an antique loom. The old loom was discovered in the building that now is the chapel/library. It was a rusty, mildewed, damaged piece of Americana from the late 19th century. Eventually divine providence allowed Beverly to meet some people who knew about weaving which lead her to contact another individual who knew how to use that particular machine and was willing to teach Beverly how to use it. We had to do repairs, clean off decades of accumulating rust, oil the metal parts, buy string, and so much more to bring back the usability of this forgotten piece of a machine. With rags, cut up blue jeans, particular types of yarn, Beverly learned how to be an amateur weaver. Often during those early years I would hear her weaving some beautiful rugs on the machine that she eventually gave away as presents.

The loom is constructed of hundreds of vertical threads which are right next to each other. This is called the warp. They are stretched between two horizontal wooden warp beams which is the foundation of the future rug. These longitudinal threads are under pressure to facilitate the interweaving of the horizontal threads (or rags, or torn blue jeans) named the “woof.” The pattern of a rug was in the weavers mind as she interlaced the woof materials into the warp and as the finished product was completed, the warp threads had virtually disappeared from an observer’s eye sight.

The warp holds the whole piece together, but the woof is what you see. The reality of all of our lives is there is a good and evil vicarious experience that wars in our own souls. In C.S. Lewis’ last book in the Narnia series the internal struggle is vividly illustrated: "The dwarves are for the dwarves and they placed themselves in a position to receive no help from without.” Lucy asks Aslan, the Lion, with tears streaming down her young and innocent face, “Could you not do something for the dwarfs?” “Dearest”, says Aslan, “I show you both what I can and cannot do; you see they will not let us help them. They have chosen cunning instead of belief. Their prison is in their own minds, yet they are in prison; and so afraid of being taken in that they cannot be taken out.” There are those with childhoods of abuse, neglect, alcoholic parents, abandonment, molestation and evils against them that has their souls (warp), eschewed in such a way that the woofs of their life are to cover up the shame and humiliation and inner sorrow of their adult life in such a way that the warp cannot be observed and/or brought forth into the light for restoration and resurrection. Trying to fix addictions, mental illness, laziness, dishonesty, personality disorders, impulse control disorders, sloth, criminality, etc., as if we could, leads to despair or at least to become cynical enough to just quit trying to help others in need. Twenty-three years at the Village has taught me that to just give up on people, to quit trying to undo the woofs of their life is the wrong response as the struggles of the poor and needy is the arena of God’s working in the world.

I was thinking of the warp and the woof as a metaphor of life while cleaning up some rooms that were in severe disarray after a resident had left.
the Village to move to their own home to begin the new phase of their life journey. The writer of most of the books of the New Testament tells that when he was sent out that the elders told him: “that should go unto all peoples and that they should remember the poor;” and Paul continues, “the very thing I was eager to do” (Galatians 2:9-10). Later Paul wrote instructions regarding the “Lord’s Supper” and tells us that the spiritual practice isn’t all about confession and introspection (which is important) but is about communal practice of welcome and grace to the partakers. As he wrote: “Now this I declare to you, when you get together there are divisions, or do you despise the church by humiliating those who have nothing?” (I Corinthians 11:17-22) I think Paul is saying to us that we will receive judgment when we partake of the communion and have not equal concern for the needy, the other parts of the church body (see I Corinthians 12:21-26) that we should have been caring about.

In Romans, Chapter 8 we are offered an understanding of what is a Christian’s “warp”. We all have woven a life of woofs into our life journey and the rugs of our life are beginning to show what we are becoming. But the reason we are to aid others, to invite them to fellowship of our breaking bread together is because of the reality of chapter 8 in our lives. The foundational warp of a believer’s life is the activity of the Spirit of Christ (verse 1-8) who lives in us. We are not left as orphans here on earth because Jesus is in the life of the Father, and we are in Him and He is in us (John 14:15-20). As a result of the Spirit residing in us our first fruits (the warp of a believers life), and a missing element in some churches, and the cause of divisions in the body of Christ, is that we: “…suffer with him, that we may be glorified together... for we know that the whole creation moaneth and travaileth in pain together...even we groan within ourselves.” Being filled with the Spirit of Christ is to lament the pain of our past, betrayals, to face the times of lack of compassion, the sorrows of personal soul loss, the disappointments, the failures and eventually to say, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.” The warp of our new life, filled with the Spirit is not programs, happy songs, prosperity messages, or dishonest feelings hidden in a pretext of looking good. I do not know who wrote the following, but I hope you don’t mind: “When we grumble, we focus on ourselves and see only our physical needs. We don’t want God’s presence. Lament (groaning) is and always will be, about us being real with God, giving him all our emotions—happy, sad, angry, and so on. And in the process of being real, we desire one thing: God’s intimate presence.”

I just continued to clean up the disarrayed rooms, an “interruption of my agenda driven day” and hoped that I could remember what I had begun to think about as I bagged the trash. My role is to shelter the wounded souls from humiliations and degradations even if they are self inflicted. I will continue to remain with a fidelity to the daily routines and sow seeds of eternity in other’s lives with some daily gestures of love and eventually forgiveness. I’m still learning how to experience resurrection.

A poem by Ann Weems says so well what I have been attempting to author this month that begins Thanksgiving and Advent: “In the godforsaken, obscene quicksand of life, there is a deafening alleluia/ rising from the souls of those who weep, and of those who weep with those who weep. / If you watch, you will see/the hand of God/putting the stars back in their skies/one by one/Yesterdays pain/Some of us walk in Advent/tethered to our unresolved yesterdays/the pain still stabbing/the hurt still throbbing./ It’s not that we don’t know better;/it’s just that we can’t stand up anymore by ourselves. / On the way to Bethlehem, will you give us a hand?”

Lament for those whose “warp” is hidden from our view, to the “pretty colors I weave” in my warp to hide the lack of true compassion, honesty, pretense, from my failure to let the Spirit rule is where I need a hand Lord, on your way to Bethlehem. Lament has the potential to change a heart. It compels us, prayerfully all of us, to wrestle with God and his profound love for all his people.

Have a blessed and joyful Thanksgiving season,

David Engle
DESPITE ALL OF THE MULTIPLE TASKS REQUIRED TO OPEN UP A BUILDING THAT HAD BEEN VACANT FOR 7 YEARS the desire from the beginning days was to put together a play ground area for the children that we served and were to serve in the future. Volunteers from Eastwood Baptist in Tulsa put together the first swing set (it is still here 23 years later) and donated some playground toys; Cross Church of Rogers, Arkansas has mulched the area for the past few years; Key Point Church of Bentonville installed a wooden fence; and in October employees of LOWE’S have volunteered and donated the materials to upgrade the playground to a near masterpiece of fun and excitement for the children. The cold temperatures slowed the completion and at press time it is still a work in progress, but we wanted you to see the progress. You get an idea of the improvements and the children are already enjoying the playground.

A BEAUTIFUL FALL DAY THAT WARMED INTO THE HIGH 50s allowed us to enjoy a festival for the children in the outdoors. Thanks Gypsy for the lemonade and cotton candy machines, to the children dressed up in costumes and of course the pleasure of hot dogs, smores, and more. One of our granddaughters (Sophia) attended dressed as a gnome, but she did not want to remain as a yard ornament after the party.

THE PAST 24 CHRISTMASES AT RESTORATION VILLAGE there have been many adults and children who have experienced their first Christmas celebration ever. The memories of those times are embellished in our minds and hearts. God has met all of the needs throughout the history of Restoration Village. Sometimes we need to share with you the Village’s Christmas list. There have been some major appliance breakdowns this autumn season: icemaker, commercial dishwasher, smaller appliances, and two of the automobiles. These are items that are necessary to the health, the ability to serve, and the call of the Village in giving those in need an opportunity for restoration and renewal. Most of the repairs we responded to immediately, some are still on hold, but the ministry has not been interrupted. An extra gift in the next two months would get the Village back in line with budget.
OVERLOOKING THE MEMORIAL GARDEN
DEDICATED TO THE CHILDREN THAT HAVE DIED
AS A RESULT OF ABUSE since January 1, 2000 in
Benton County is the statue “Rachael Weeping for the
Children.” I know that I will not live long enough to see the
end of child abuse in my life time, but I can see the promise
land just over the next few decades as others graduate from
the National Child Protection Training Center, and the
programs that are now occurring continue to enlarge
awareness and allies to the value of children.

There are stories in our local newspaper and on the nightly
news occurring weekly concerning the allegations, arrests and convictions of perpetrators who have abused
children in our geographical area. The revelations of the decades of abuse to children in the Catholic Church by
Priests, the Penn State University and Jerry Sandusky cover up were nightly news at one time, and now the Boy
Scouts of America cover up of decades of volunteers abusing boys is exposing a national disgrace of silence and
participation of too many institutions and programs that were more concerned about caring for themselves than
looking after children. Following the recent news stories about a mega church in Oklahoma and the churches
response and legal maneuvers by same again makes me think of the decades of denial and hiding of the facts by
the forenamed organizations. The motivation of compassion is the other person’s need, not our own agenda.

There were multitudes of children sitting in the marketplace, wounded, crippled and destitute for decades as they
begged for some relief from their circumstances and deprivation. One day a stranger walked by and asked one of
the children, “Do you want to be well?” The child looked up and replied, “Sir, there is no one to help me?” The
child wasn’t complaining, didn’t seem to be feeling sorry for her predicament, but was just expressing reality,
“there is no man to help me.” What the child did not know was that she was expressing her words to the One that
“When they suffered, he suffered also” (Isaiah 63:9) and could and would cure the wounded. This illustration is
an imposed translation from John, chapter 5, to express the point that “there was no man” to lift the wounded to
the healing waters of life.

Max Lucado wrote in his book, No Wonder They Call Him Savior, one of the most moving passages I have ever
read that implies what Rachael Weeping for the Children, the Memorial Garden, and by grace I pray reaches into
your heart and continues to grow in mine: “Tears. Those tiny drops of humanity. Those round, wet balls of fluid
that tumble from eyes, creep down our cheeks, and splash on the floor of our hearts...They are always present at
such times. They should be, that’s their job. They are miniature messengers; on call twenty-four hours a day to
substitute for crippled words. They drip, drop and pour from the corner of our souls, carrying with them the
deepest emotions we possess. They tumble down our faces with announcements that range from most blissful joy
to the darkest despair.”

When you read of a child that has been wounded and hurt by the evil of an adult, do you lament? When you hear
about an appeal to aid children financially do you turn away or do you pray? When you hear about a child silently
saying, “There is no man to help me” do you reply like Jesus did, “Rise and walk” or do you pass over to the
other side of the road?

We are grateful to you for your role in Restoration Ministries, for your concern for children, and continued
support during the years. The Children’s Advocacy Center, the Memorial Garden, and the residential facilities
are a testament to the possibilities of carrying others to the healing pool to meet the true Man and His restoring
hand.