

On Thursday evenings I lead a dance session with a friend at the Camphill Community near Belfast. It is a residential home for adults with learning difficulties. There would be 30-40 participants, including some staff, each enjoying dance in their own way. We get to know the names of those residents who are able to tell us, many are not able to speak.

One young man, a tall red-head, comes to every session, he is not able to tell me his name. In the circle-dances he holds my hand too tight, and sometimes he will take his other hand, reach across and pinch the skin on the top of my hand. When he does this I look at him and wonder "*What he is trying to say?*" I've learned to anticipate this and brush his hand away, or distract him in dance.

Last night, we were in the circle, he was beside me, we were holding hands, he didn't try to pinch me, he moved in a different way, he lifted my hand towards his face, it felt wrong to pull away. I had no idea what his next action might be, and wondered to myself ... *is going to try and bite me ...* I was glad I had not pulled away as I watched him place the gentlest of kisses on the very spot he usually pinches. At that moment I said to myself, "*he knows my pain*".

The same week I had to take that terrible decision to put my dog Sidiki to sleep. He was deteriorating quickly from inoperable tumours which had only been discovered two days previously. He had been my companion for 11 years. I was heart-broken. The following day I heard the tragic news that a dear friend, Peter Woods, has also died.

Peter's funeral service was beautiful. He was deeply involved in the Belfast music and dance scene; it was he who asked me to take over the dance session at Camphill – introducing me to my red-haired friend. The pastor gave a wonderful tribute and at the end of the service we all sang ...

*Dance, dance, wherever you may be , I am the Lord of the Dance, said He  
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be, and I'll lead you all in the  
Dance, said He...*

Peter was a great animal lover and as reflect on a very difficult time, I take comfort in imagining Peter and Sidiki taking off on a whole new adventure together.