

Professor Stephanie Sauvé led a pilgrimage to the IONA Community on the Isle of IONA in Scotland in June of 2009. The pilgrims were members of the June Intensive Celtic Spirituality Class and participants in the Gene Bennett Life Long Learning Program. The Isle of IONA is known as the cradle of Christianity in Scotland; the IONA Community of the Church of Scotland was formed in the 1930's by Rev. George MacLeod.

The CRCDS group joined pilgrims from all over the world for a week of living in community. A restored 12th Century Abbey was home for 38 pilgrims and a small staff of volunteers and paid staff for the week. Upon arrival on IONA the group was greeted with tea (there is always tea) and a vision of daily life together – a daily life bracketed by worship, nourished by food at long refectory tables, enlivened by study, and cemented in the task of cleaning our living space and serving each other at meals. 38 strangers become a community in small and mighty ways over the week, living together, hearing one another's stories, praying for the hopes and desires that people carried in the rucksacks of their hearts to IONA seeking insight, discernment, resolution - ease of burden. Folks laughed and wept at table, in chapel, in the chapter room, on the road and off the road trekking the terrain of this Isle (3 miles long and 1.9 miles at its widest part).

The week at IONA Community was more than just a time of experiencing life in community. More than checking off something on one's life list. It was an invitation to be transformed and to live in ways that are transformative. To live seeking right relationship with self, the other, the divine and all that is, claiming life as worship and worship as life, and sojourning as one who honors the past so as to learn from it, and thereby be about right and just living in the present.

Of course this trip to Scotland was not a time of all prayer and no play. There was a boat trip to the Isle of Staff to see the Puffins and an evening of Scottish dancing called a ceili. Further, with the blessing of an excellent driver who loved to show off the heritage of Scotland, our CRCDS group toured castles and abbeys and enjoyed a traditional pub meal at the Lion and Unicorn.

In the Fall Term the spirit and blessing of this pilgrimage will be shared with the CRCDS Community. A display in a showcase on the main hall of Strong Hall has already been created. Further, a worship service is being planned and the project and photos of the students will be presented.

The next CRCDS pilgrimage to IONA Community and Celtic Spirituality class will be the June term of 2012.