

Friends of The Cathedral of The Isles and College of The Holy Spirit
Newsletter September 2021

This has been a very long and difficult time for us all and I hope that you have managed to come through these periods of lockdown safely. The Cathedral of The Isles was of course hit with the Scottish Government's enforced closure of churches. Interestingly the congregation were happy to come back as soon as we were allowed to do so. Above all else the safety and control of spread of the infection were paramount in everyone's understanding after reopening. Eucharistic worship began again and we had several guests join us from the Church of Scotland which for operational reasons remained closed for some time after we could reopen. During the pandemic and the closures the Churches, clergy and churches united to provide a breadth of ecumenical worship made available on social media. You may have joined in some of our activities and particularly the ones released for the major festivals we shared through our Facebook site.

More recently Alastair programmed "Concerts for a Summer Afternoon" which began again thanks to the generosity of international concert artists giving of their time and talents to The Cathedral. To start with numbers permitted were very small but as the regulations relaxed our numbers rose again to suitably sized audiences for our artists. Grateful thanks go to our special friends international concert pianists Angela Brownridge and Jonathan Cohen who came up from London to perform for us.

Thankfully the Cathedral Guest House also was able to reopen taking a few B&B guests as regulations permitted. Patrick and his staff have been very thorough in their preparation of the bedrooms with care and sanitizing so that guests have felt welcome and safe while staying with us.

You will have picked up from the Friends website that sale of a field adjacent to the St Andrew's Cemetery was entered into by The Cumbrae Trustees and Island Retreat Ltd. The letter sent by the Friends Committee was to primarily express concern at the lack of consultation and to give our reservations about the suitability of this venture of glamping pods so close to the Cathedral grounds and St Andrew's Cemetery. There has so far been no reply to this letter. All we know comes from local sources telling us that planning permission is currently with North Ayrshire Council Planning Department and their judgment about its suitability will be given at their meeting on or about 1st September.

One important grant the Friends have been able to make has been towards unexpected repair work to The Cathedral organ. Woodworm infestation was spotted in the wooden blocks supporting some of the larger pipes and in the wooden casing of the electric blower unit. These had to be replaced speedily by Harrison and Harrison Organ Builders and wood worm control carried out. Thankfully all this has been completed satisfactorily. A check of the whole building is now needed to see if this infestation is wider spread.

This year it will be possible to hold our residential Friends Weekend once more. Starting on Friday afternoon 29th October, the Annual Meeting of The Friends on Saturday 30th October at 10.30am, and closing with Sung Eucharist on Sunday 31st October at 11am when Bishop Keith will preside and preach.

During the Friends Weekend Bishop Keith will be resident in The College and you will be able to share with him the vision for the future of the Cathedral and College and the role of The Friends. Other interesting activities are being considered and full information will be forthcoming in the next few weeks. Please look ahead now in your diary to see if you can manage to come and join us. Friends are asked to contact Patrick on 01475 530353 or by email as soon as possible to book. If you can only manage to come for the Annual Meeting on the Saturday, a Friends buffet lunch will be available after the meeting. If you can be a resident for the weekend please book your room as soon as you possibly can.

Life at Millport has changed dramatically this year with a huge influx of visitors, especially day visitors. Of course this has been driven by the whole business of “staycation”. Good for our businesses, travelling on and off the island has required long queues and much patience. Please factor this into any visits even although this may quieten down by the end of October. Caledonian Macbrayne staff have been very hard worked throughout the Pandemic. They have remained helpful, cheerful, and professional throughout. We thank them for looking after us.

You will be interested to learn that in the Garrison there is now a designated and properly equipped motorhome site. This has been a great step forward to look after our visitors and free up parking round the island. The hospitality sector with the Millport Support Group has wonderfully worked to provide for the children, the elderly, the house-bound and those having to isolate. As elsewhere we have been blessed by the way everyone has pulled together to support the whole of the island community.

Looking forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting if you can make it this year. With every blessing from The Cathedral.

Stay safe and keep well,

Canon Alec.