

<Exodus 14:19-31; Exodus 15:1b-11; Matthew 18:21-35>

*Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable to you, O Holy One, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.*

In 1938, Scottish clergyman George Macleod was ministering to the poor in Glasgow and began to realize that the church had done a disservice in connecting to and offering either hope or support to the poor in the city and region. In short, the church was not living out the gospel or providing what Christ commanded it to offer. Discovering the abandoned abbey on the isle of Iona, which had been established in the 6th Century by St. Columba, but later put into ruin during the Protestant Reformation, Macleod restored the abbey. He then went to work transforming it into a place of worship and communal life for the poor and everyday Christians of Glasgow, as well as a training ground for clergy. It would later become a pilgrimage site for Christians from around the world. Of the place, Macleod said, “Iona is a ‘thin place’ where only tissue paper separates the material from the spiritual.”

Such “thin places” are known as liminal - meaning that there is very little which actually separates the world as we see it from the spiritual world as we seek and perceive it - the space the width of a bit of tissue paper. For almost 100 years Christians have made their way to Iona for spiritual renewal and connection. Our church has sent senior high youth Iona periodically for a little more than ten years now, including this past summer. And rather than tell you about their experience myself, I wanted to invite them to tell you a little bit about their experience in this thin, liminal space, in their own words.

Starter questions to our youth:

- What was most meaningful to you about this trip?
- What was a place or time you were most aware of God’s presence or the love of Christ?
- What part of this trip will you carry with you in the weeks to come?
- What do you want the congregation to understand about this experience, and why it was so meaningful?

*(Time for their reflections)*

It is said that, one day while out in the community of Iona, Columba was returning to the monastery, and on the way back he made a little detour. From a mound above the monastery, he blessed Iona - the community and the monastery - and all the people who would in the future come to the island for his sake. Then he returned to his cell, not to rest but to go on with his daily stint of copying the scriptures. He was working on the thirty-fourth psalm. He wrote steadily for a while, but when got to the verse that says, *They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing*, he put down his pen. It seemed a perfect place to stop. “I think I can write no more,” he said. (Eileen Dunlop, *Tales of St. Columba*). Amen.