

“According to Mark”

David Ireson

Abbey: Saturday 5th May – Friday 11th May:

This is a study of Mark’s Gospel in a week, based on (the now classic) radical interpretation by Ched Myers which makes the Gospel immediately relevant today. You will be given basic printed notes, but the texts, full background study, maps and commentary can be copied on to your SD card or Memory Stick to take home, freeing everyone from note taking and encouraging discussion.

Mark could not have imagined for a moment that anyone would be reading his Gospel two thousand years after he wrote it. Is the world today very different from first century Palestine? Mark’s Christian community in Syria was set in a world of epidemic violence and oppression; so are we. Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus offered his Christian community encouragement, direction and hope; he does the same for us today.

A key Church of England report states: “In the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Church has all the resources it needs to conduct its mission task.”^{[1][1]} That makes the short 16 chapters of Mark more than a comforting ‘spiritual’ book to read at bedtime. It challenges and directs our every waking moment. Our whole faith is grounded in an historical event and we need to make the effort to leap across the huge chasms of history, culture and language to relate to the world-view of two thousand years ago. “God created man in his own image; and we have returned the compliment”^{[2][2]} Again and again we need to return to the first Gospel to be written and see there what being a disciple of Jesus *really* involves.

Led by David Ireson, a vicar, teacher and member of the Iona Community.

[1] “Resourcing Mission in the 21st Century” 2006, the Archbishop’s Council Council.

[2] Attributed to George Bernard Shaw, John Dryden and many others!

The Pilgrimage of Life Alastair McIntosh

Sat 22 – Fri 28 Sept 2012

This week will be an exploration of some meanings of pilgrimage. It will ask from the Isle of Iona a



deeper sense of meaning and direction in our lives, especially for those who are committed to social, environmental and/or spiritual transformation. Life has been described as a journey of 'departure' on the journey, 'initiation' through the trials and 'return' to feed life back into the wider community. How does pilgrimage help? How might the sacred places, stories and traditions of Iona open doorways that can strengthen the articulation, or flow, between the inner and the outer life? Participants coming to this course are encouraged to read and bring with them Adomnan's 'Life of St Columba' (Penguin Classics). If they wish to familiarise themselves with the work of the week's leader in advance, the

recommended read is either *Soil and Soul* or *Hell & High Water*, but a meditative browse through Adomnan is the priority.

Alastair McIntosh represents the Quakers on the Iona Community (advisory) Board and was a patron of the Growing Hope appeal. His books, which include *Soil and Soul* and *Rekindling Community*, have been described by George Monbiot as 'world-changing,' by the Archbishop of Canterbury as a source of 'inspiration,' and by Thom Yorke of Radiohead as 'truly mental.' He has contributed to the programme of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature on sacred natural sites and lives in Greater Govan where he is a founding director of the GalGael Trust, partly inspired by the witness of George MacLeod. He is currently writing a book about a pilgrimage through the Hebridean Isles of Lewis and Harris where he was raised.



**Winter Quiet Week,
24th November – 1st December
Stephen Wright**

*“Is this place really nearer to God?
Is the wall thin between our whispers
And his listening? I only know
The world grows less and less –“
 (“Iona” – Kenneth C Steven)*

Iona is a wonderful island with a deep and rich spiritual history. Thousands pilgrimage here every year in search of spiritual renewal. It is said that Iona is a “thin” place – the veil between realities, between ourselves and God, is least intrusive. The island and the Abbey with its community will provide us with that safe sacred space where we can step off the hustle and bustle of everyday life for while and “come home” to that inner place of peace and quiet; time to “let God be God” and to listen deeply to that “still small voice” within. This will be a time primarily of contemplation and reflection within the fellowship of our group and supported by guided teachings and meditations each day, drawn from the Christian contemplative tradition (no previous experience is necessary, guidance will be given). We will be together for a week, sharing our spiritual lives as well as sharing the experience of living in community with the added benefit of having a room to oneself. There will be ample opportunity to explore the elemental beauty of Iona together as well as a guided pilgrimage around the island midweek. This inclusive and open week will offer inspiration, direction, renewal and encouragement for all.

Stephen has been visiting Iona for over 20 years, he loves the island and has run many retreats here. He is on the new member programme of the Iona Community. He works as a spiritual director for the Sacred Space Foundation (see www.sacredspace.org.uk) helping those in spiritual crisis and guiding spiritual seekers. Before this he had a long and distinguished history in academia and in the British National Health Service, gathering lots of glittering prizes along the way. He has co-authored two books exploring the nature of healing relationships - “Therapeutic Touch” and “Sacred Space – right relationship and spirituality in health care” (both co-written with Jean Sayre-Adams). “Reflections on spirituality and health” published in 2005, by Wiley, received outstanding reviews. “Coming Home” was published in 2009, a personal and scholarly account of spiritual awakening rooted in the experience of his work as a spiritual director, for which he received significant training in the presence of several renowned teachers and at the Interfaith Seminary (www.theinterfaithfoundation.com). “Contemplation – words for the Way Home” was published in 2010. He is an active trustee of several charities and an Honorary Fellow of the University of Cumbria. He works with organisations developing the practice of healing, spiritual care, conflict resolution and staff support. He is an ordained interfaith minister and spiritual director and brings a rich experience of spiritual practice from many faiths to his work. His published work includes songs, chants, dances (“Song and Dance for the way Home”), poetry (“Beloved”) and prose influenced by his primary spiritual practice of the Contemplative Way. He lives in the English Lake District, deepening service and spiritual practice, participating in his local church community, taking care of his organic garden and enjoying grandfatherhood.

