

Reading the Big Book

Dates: May 16th – 22nd 2009

Summary

Join us at the Camas Centre on the Isle of Mull for a week of reflection, exploration, discussion and just enjoying the outdoors! The Celts spoke of two books in which it was possible to discover or 'read' God. The little book was the Bible, the Big Book was creation. Kathy Galloway leads this reflective and recreational programme at the Camas Centre during the Hebridean springtime. Join us in reading a chapter of the 'big book'.



Details

The Christian church in the English-speaking world has had access to the Bible in English for over 500 years, in many different forms. But Celtic Christianity, as it blossomed into the British Isles via the Celtic monks over a thousand years ago, acknowledged that God speaks in other ways too. John Scotus Eriugena, a 9th century Irish theologian, is recorded as talking about the 'little book' and the 'big book'. Here are some thoughts from Philip Newell:

"The answer to the question 'Where do we look for God?' is not 'away from creation' but, rather, 'deep within all that has been created.' ... Eriugena said God speaks to us through two books: the 'little book' of Scripture and the 'big book' of creation. This is not to be naive about what has gone wrong in creation. It is not to pretend that creation, like the human soul, has not been infected by sin. It is to affirm, however, that creation is like a sacred text that we can learn to read in our journey of knowing God. It is also to say that what we do to matter is a spiritual issue, whether that be the matter of our human bodies, the matter of the body of creation, or... how we handle the resources of the earth." - Philip J. Newell,¹

Kathy Galloway will lead this reflective and recreational week at Camas. It is a chance to join with other people in reading part of this 'Big Book' here on the hebridean Isle of Mull. The timetable is flexible depending on the group but the days are designed to allow a mix of structured activity and individual exploration / reflection time. Each day will be framed by reflections and an evening discussion session.

Specific activities are flexible and depend on the group's preferences, but may include:

- Short walks around the Camas area, perhaps nature or landscape focused e.g. view points and beaches.
- Longer walks in the area with packed lunch. e.g. Isle of Erraid, Tiriregan Nature Reserve
- Day trip to the isle of Iona.
- Garden sessions: tour of our organic vegetable garden and the chance to join in and get your hands dirty.
- Visit to local organic weaving mill
- Art and craft sessions.
- Music and poetry times
- Adventurous activities: kayaking, abseiling, raft-building

Camas was originally a granite quarry in the 19th century; the houses were built 170 years ago. Until 13 years ago it was a salmon fishing station; and since the 1940s, a place for young people and adults to come and experience a different lifestyle, run by the Iona Community.

¹. Philip J. Newell, "Celtic spirituality listens for the heartbeat of God: Presbyterianism is influenced by ancient Celtic and Mediterranean traditions." Presbyterian Record, 1/4/2004

In 2006 the centre underwent a major refurbishment with improved accommodation, living spaces, wind turbine and solar panels. Off the electricity grid, Camas offers you the chance to experience a lifestyle a few steps away from modern expectations. We use local resources (wood and peat) for heating, and lighting is provided by candles and lanterns. In 2006, a wind turbine was installed and provides the centre with limited electricity for washing facilities, office equipment, and fire alarm systems.

Perched on the edge of the sea, a mile and a half from the nearest road, far from the customary bustle of town and city life, Camas is an ideal place to experience nature. Seals and otters frequent our bay, crabs and lobsters live just under the surface, and grey herons patrol the boundary between land and water. Oystercatchers and plovers nest on our shore; buzzards, ravens, eagles and kestrels soar above us, while the ever-changing tapestry of heather and bracken covers the pink local granite. Springtime is a good time to see the local wildlife as it emerges after the winter.

Kathy Galloway is a practical theologian, writer, activist and current Leader of the Iona Community.



Things you should know before you come

Camas is based in old quarrymen's houses at a secluded bay on the Island of Mull. The Camas road end is reached approximately 2 miles before Fionnphort (location of the Iona ferry); however there is no vehicle access to Camas itself, which is reached by a walk of about 20 – 30 minutes (1½ miles) across a moorland track. This lends itself to a sense of isolation, adventure and an appreciation of the simpler things in life.

- All Camas staff members live at the centre; our working hours are from breakfast (usually 8.30am) to 10pm and someone is always reachable in an emergency.
- Staff take it in turns to cook and we also eat all meals with the guests who are staying at the centre.
- The food at Camas is vegetarian – please let us know of any special dietary needs in advance.
- Camas has 6 bunk rooms, each sleeping from 4-8 people, to a total of 28. Sleeping bags are essential (but we do have spares if necessary).
- Both staff and guests at Camas take part in daily chores, which are done in teams by rota. They include tasks such as washing up, cleaning toilets, cutting firewood and helping with the garden.
- The days at Camas are framed by morning and evening reflections. These are generally led by the Camas staff, and focus sometimes on people's experiences at Camas and sometimes on wider experiences or on issues of social justice (such as Fair trade). Everyone is invited to attend reflections and to participate as fully as they wish.

Cost and Booking

£210 (inc. VAT at 15%) for 6 nights (Saturday – Friday morning) including all food, accommodation and activities. Activities with external providers (e.g. fishing trips, ferry crossings) may cost extra.

For bookings and more information contact:

tel: 01681 700404. e-mail: camas.bookings@iona.org.uk web: www.iona.org.uk

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