

8th August 2021

Hallowed

“So hallowed and so gracious is the time.”

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

This Sunday, in a special service in Iona Abbey, several new members of the Iona Community will be hallowed. In an act of worship, commitment and dedication, led by the leader of the Iona Community and others, they will kneel to be blessed. They will have come a long way on their journey of commitment, including two years on the Community's new members' programme. They will have been nurtured in the Community's Family Groups, prayed for and encouraged by many others. And today they will be hallowed into full membership of the dispersed Iona Community, "gathered and scattered", to journey forward in God's name.

In the summer of 1973, I knelt where they will kneel, to make the same commitment, to enter the same Community and to experience the same hallowing. That day remains one of the most important days of my life. I thank God that "so hallowed and so gracious is the time."

I've also been hallowed at other times on my journey of life and faith. I was hallowed when I became a "licentiate" as a newly qualified minister; hallowed when I was ordained; hallowed by colleague Presbyters when I was inducted to each of my parishes. These were all "official" events, special, well-constructed, like the hallowing in Iona Abbey will be today. But I have been hallowed in countless other ways too. I've been hallowed when an elderly lady held my hand and prayed for me; hallowed by other hospice chaplains at an annual gathering; hallowed with the Spirit's blessing on a silent retreat; hallowed when I've received an affirmative letter; hallowed through tears at a funeral; hallowed in my marriage; hallowed in the glory of an East Lothian sunset.

God will be in the hallowing service in Iona Abbey with my friends on this day, as God blessed me forty-eight years ago. But, thank God, there will be more hallowings yet to come for them and for me, beyond our imagining. God is not to be confined. Hallowing will always be around us. It's up to us to open ourselves to it when it's available again.

A prayer for today

Today I pray for those who are to be hallowed, and for those being hallowed who don't know it yet. May we all be willing to open ourselves to God's blessings when we need them most. Amen