

***The Society for Ecumenical Studies
in association with the Iona Community***

Breaking Down Barriers in the Twenty-First Century

Second Ecumenical Week of Study and Prayer with the Iona Community, 8-14 September 2007

Roy Davidson, Chairperson LEPC

Breaking Down Walls in the 21st Century

It was one of those telephone calls. You know - "would you like to come to Iona for a week and join with 40 others in a week of study and meditation?".

"We would like you to represent your Parish and the Church of Scotland are paying" (that was a good start). "Like minded people are coming from Ecumenical partnerships all over the UK and further afield and we would like your input". (It's always worth trying flattery).

And so in September I took the train to Oban, sailed to Craignure, bussed across Mull and ferried over to Iona. Most others had travelled much further, even from the USA!

The week was about church unity in the world. We asked ourselves who should move the first stone? What can the bible tell us about breaking down walls within ourselves? How far should we strive for unity and at what point do we accept that we can live with difference?

We learned a lot from each others' circumstances in Parishes and Partnerships across the land and not surprisingly discovered that we all faced similar challenges. Obviously I drew parallels with Livingston and the journey we are on, trying to find God's answer for us. Our challenge is not only between ourselves but also with our sponsoring denominations as they continue to grapple with this strange being - Livingston Ecumenical Parish.

We are on the threshold of getting more resources to serve the church and community

here and that is great news. However we need to keep questioning as we journey to make sure we are on the right path. Current conversations between us are considering our very being - are we Parish or Partnership? After one year we are reviewing our mission strategy progress, our methods of implementation, our place in the community and our relationships within and with others.

There are hardly any street lights on Iona and so the clear night sky is lit up and the world is wrapped with billions of stars. I thought how awe inspiring but also how small we are in relation to God's creation and yet He trusts us to do His work here, in unity, while living with difference.