



Letter from Iona and Capacitar Scotland

The Isle of Iona looking toward Mull

June, 2019

Dear Friends,

Special greetings to you from the Isle of Iona where I have been part of a week-long pilgrimage led by Philip and Ali Newell who in past years were the ministers of Iona Abbey. This week of pilgrimage was gifted to me and Capacitar when we were named honorary partners of Heartbeat, the organization supporting the visionary mission of the Newells (www.heartbeat.org). Along with forty men and women from many parts of the US and Canada, we journeyed on a week of reflection, meditation, teaching, ritual and prayer. We opened ourselves to letting go of the past and to rebirthing the new in our personal and organizational lives at this time in our world.

This was a fitting time for me to be part of the pilgrimage to Iona. This past year we celebrated the 10th anniversary of Capacitar in Scotland. Ali Newell brought Capacitar to Scotland in 2008, and since that time, hundreds of people have participated in our trainings in healing and transformation and have reached out to touch the lives of many in Scotland, the UK and other parts of the world.

Pilgrimage

I was not alone on this pilgrimage, but brought along in spirit the global family of Capacitar with our communities and leaders in the Americas, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. On the first day we walked to the south end of Iona to the Strand of the Monks who were martyred on the white sands by invading tribes



White Strand of the Martyred Monks, Iona

in the 8th century. There, led by Philip Newell, we created a mandala of the elements in which we placed stones to symbolize what we desired for healing within ourselves, our communities and the larger world. The red stone that I placed represented the blood and suffering of the many people with whom Capacitar has worked during the last 30 years—in Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Rwanda, DR Congo, Japan, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Palestine, and in so many other places, as well as the refugees in the US and elsewhere. We reflected how each of us has been born as a unique creation that the world needs at this time. And together we prayed that we may be instruments of healing in our world.

Through the teachings of the Newells we learned how Columba came from Ireland in 536 AD to found a community on Iona that was a light to many around the world. We met Brigid of Kildaire who came to Iona embodying the divine feminine as healer and midwife. Reflecting on Capacitar's mission of "healing ourselves, healing our world", I recommitted to a deepening of our spirit, to be "midwives" of empowerment and transformation to those most in need, and in the spirit of Celtic Spirituality, to awaken the integration of body, mind and spirit. And we learned of the visionary work of George MacLeod, who after years of abandonment, rebuilt Iona Abbey and inspired a non-violent community with the labor of unemployed workers and ministers from Glasgow at the time of World War II. The Abbey to this day attracts pilgrims from around the world who come to live in community in the spirit of nonviolence and to connect with the earth, sea and sky of this ancient and holy Isle.

Pilgrimage Walk

During our week of retreat, we were invited to walk in pilgrimage around the Isle. Starting at the site of the Nunnery Philip and Ali led us on a strenuous 9-mile walk to many of the sacred sites. At the Crossroads we contemplated the crossroads of our lives and those who have inspired us at significant moments. I reflected on the many people and synchronicities that have led Capacitar through our 30-year journey to bring ways of trauma healing to over 45 countries. At the Hill of the Angels I thought of those who have been the guiding angels supporting and upholding our work. And I thanked the many inspiring people who helped create Capacitar and who have passed. Iona is called "a thin place" where the veil is thin and angels and spirits are near. At Columba's Bay we chose two stones—one to throw into the sea to let go of what were challenges of the past; a second stone to take with us to represent what calls us into the future. I thought of the new focuses of Capacitar to walk with refugees and asylum seekers in the US and around the world, and to bring healing and transformation to places dealing with issues of gender violence, especially against women and children.



Philip Newell guiding the mandala ritual of welcome



Ali Newell leading Tai Chi body movement



The Newells preparing us for our Pilgrimage Walk



Praying at the Crossroads



Columba's Bay, the Bay of New Beginnings



Celtic Spirituality Pilgrimage Group with Iona Abbey on the left

Celebration

On the last day of pilgrimage we celebrated our time together and were blessed and anointed by Philip and Ali for the next stages of our lives. During a ritual in the ancient Oran Chapel, the Newell's son, Cameron, whom I have known since he was a child, played the Scottish fiddle for us. His closing song was "Pat's Jig", a delightful piece Cammy had composed for Capacitar Scotland's 10th Anniversary in 2018. Our pilgrimage group danced and moved in solidarity and farewell. As we gathered for final reflections on our gratitude for the week and our commitment for the future, a beautiful rainbow appeared, spanning the sky of Iona, a blessing for our lives and our future steps.



Ali and Philip Newell with their son Cameron and his fiddle

Capacitar Scotland

Part of my time in Scotland was to facilitate another 4-module training that is being held in Perth at The Bield, and in Glasgow at Finn's Place. Since 2018, Capacitar Scotland has hosted eight 4-module trainings alternating venues between Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth, along with advanced trainings and outreach workshops in different parts of Scotland and the UK. There is a wonderful Capacitar Scotland core team that coordinates and plans the newsletter, outreach workshops, study days and networking. Capacitar Scotland also generously scholarshipped a number of participants from different countries for the Capacitar 30th Anniversary Conference. Capacitar Scotland members have shared the practices with many people in need: in hospices, in hospitals, with children in schools, rape crisis centers, church and spirituality centers, women's groups, homes for the elderly, refugees and asylum seekers, midwives and pregnant women.



A rainbow of blessing over Iona and over our lives



New Capacitar training group at the Bield

Jenny recently completed her doctorate researching how self-care is significant for midwives and for trauma related to childbirth (PTSD-CB). Scottish minister Kirrie-Lee is currently working in Calais with Syrian and Afghan refugees using Capacitar as part of her ministry. Ali, a minister at Edinburgh University Chaplaincy, has incorporated Capacitar practices into her mindfulness work with students and Camino pilgrimages. Nancy uses the practices with organizations and groups of nonviolence. Lorna integrates Capacitar practices in her work with children on the autistic spectrum. Shirley has brought Capacitar to refugees and asylum seekers, as well as to groups in Zimbabwe focused on the rehabilitation of those who have been tortured. Noreen and Jennifer use the practices with women at Rape Crisis Centers. Fran has led ongoing women's groups in spirituality and Capacitar in Arbroath. Susan has led Capacitar groups as part of the ministry of Finn's Place in Glasgow. Marianne and Robin have integrated Capacitar into the many programs of spirituality at The Bield. And so many more! So the multiplication of Capacitar healing and wellness practices by the people of Scotland is remarkable.



Capacitar Advanced Training at the Bield, Perth

Our new training group, held in Perth and Glasgow, includes a great cross-section of participants from many backgrounds—from university professors, medical doctors, psychologists, and social workers, to spiritual guides, those working with the elderly, hospice, refugees and survivors of trafficking and abuse. In the years to come the trainings will be led by members of the Scotland core team in collaboration with Capacitar International. Capacitar work will continue to be blessed by the wonderful people of Scotland.

With peace and solidarity,

Pat Cane

Capacitar Founder/Director



Capacitar Scotland 10th Anniversary Celebration, The Bield, Perth