



## **A Message from Iona**

### **by Sue Craig**

Who knew my trip to Iona in the summer of 2024 would speak to me so deeply?

I didn't really know what to expect, although Tom Cook had given our entire group a thorough briefing. There would be hikes and communal meals, boat trips, prayers and meditations, a chance to build stronger bonds with fellow parishioners. All of this was there and valued. But it doesn't describe my most cherished experience. You see on Iona time slows down, nature becomes more dominant, and there is time for private reflection too. *You can even ask yourself what is important to you.*

One day on a particularly long walk, the group decided to take a short cut over the hilly countryside of Iona. We passed a flock of sheep and I began talking to them. I kept on walking and I wasn't surprised when they began to follow my voice.

You see I come from a family of sheepherders. My great grandfather was a sheepherder and his father was too. Although I grew up in Sacramento in a then new subdivision, animals were always an important part of my family and childhood experiences.

At a deeper level, I am the last sheepherder in my family, safely and humbly leading my children and grandchildren through God's beautiful hills and humbly guiding their spiritual lives too, by example, values, my faith, and the moral compass I grew up with.

In Iona, Creation speaks to us on all sides and at all levels, sheep, birds, seas, skies, sturdy mountains. Nature surrounds us and holds us tight when we need to be held if we have the sensitivity and experience to take in this amazing gift. Being in the beauty and peace of Iona was a chance to nurture and renew my awareness of God's grace all around us and the importance of being good Stewards of Creation.