

## **STATEMENT CONCERNING THE COLLEGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

for Saturday 14 January 2023

Cathedral of the Isles, Cumbrae

The Cathedral of the Isles and the College of the Holy Spirit have a long and treasured place within the Diocese of Argyll and The Isles.

As both Bishop and as Provost of the Cathedral, I reaffirm our commitment to the Cathedral as a place of public worship and fellowship. This commitment is solid, and any discussion about the future of the College must be and will be set alongside this commitment.

As those with a strong connection to this place, I am sure that you are aware of the long and distinct history of the two institutions, Cathedral and College.

Let me stress again that this current close of the College does not affect the ministry and mission of the Cathedral. The Cathedral is not closed, is open, and worship continues – indeed, you are all invited to join us tomorrow morning, here in this place, for public worship.

Many I am sure will know of the College's fascinating origins in the generosity of its first benefactor, George Boyle, the sixth Earl of Glasgow. Finished in 1849, it was opened in 1851. In 1876 the chapel of the College was raised to the status of a Cathedral – and thus separated from the College.

As we now consider the future of the College it is worth recalling its varied uses.

From 1851 until 1885 it was a theological college of the Scottish Episcopal Church, modelled upon the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge.

From 1919 to 1927 it was the home (a convent) for nuns of the Community of St Andrew of Scotland.

From 1975 to 1985 it was the home of the Fisherfolk – the Community of the Celebration Christian Trust.

It is thus only in relatively recent years, and within living memory, that the College became a retreat house of the Diocese, latterly managed by Island Retreats Ltd. The IRL Board has managed the College on behalf of the Diocese, and has sought to ensure its place as a retreat centre. Those staying here have included church groups, committees of the Diocese and the Scottish Episcopal Church, music groups (often also in association with the Cathedral), and individuals staying for a private retreat or simply using the College as a guest house. We have enjoyed such a variety of guests, and valued their presence amongst us.

It is therefore important that this most recent period of the College's life is rightly to be affirmed by all concerned.

However – and here I repeat the words of my statement of 1 November - despite the efforts of all concerned, the trading position of The College of the Holy Spirit has become untenable with increasing financial losses.

The Board of Island Retreats Ltd therefore asked its parent body, the Standing Committee of the Diocese, to make a decision about the future running of the College. After much thought and prayer, the Standing Committee decided a period of closure is essential in order to stop the ever-increasing financial losses and to reassess how the College will operate in the future on a firm financial basis. It was for this reason that we closed the College from 1 December 2022.

This was not an easy decision. It was not taken lightly, understanding the implications it would have on staff, the Cathedral, and the island.

But, having now closed the College, the Standing Committee of the Diocese will be inviting all interested parties to explore with us what the future of the College might be, starting today with this meeting. The evidence of history is of a College used in many and varied ways – sometimes with a deep managerial link with the Diocese, at other

times with the Diocese being no more than a landlord for important work done by others.

We are therefore interested in exploring all opportunities and possibilities with nothing already decided – with you, representing, as you do, the community of Millport, amongst which the College has been pleased to dwell these many years.

I now invite other members of the Panel to make any comments they wish, and then I invite questions and comments from the floor.

The Rt Revd Dr Keith Riglin  
Bishop of Argyll and The Isles