

Solas Bhríde Spirituality Centre



Christmas Newsletter, December 2020
*Wishing each one peace, light and hope this
Christmas.*

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“Light's glory is to dispel darkness. Christ has illumined you with wisdom and the fire of his presence. It has been sparked and kindled in you. Let it blaze.”

— Caryll Houselander, [A Child in Winter: Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany with Caryll Houselander](#)

What a year we have all been through! The lives of people throughout the world have and are being impacted and disrupted by the Covid Pandemic. We are conscious of the people who have lost their lives due to Covid. We acknowledge the heartache caused by being separated from our loved ones. If there is a positive outcome, hopefully it will be that at all levels our world will be safer and more sustainable as we go into the future.



Brigid: Flame of Justice and Peace was the overarching theme of the 28th Annual Feile Bríde in Solas Bhríde and Kildare town. As always, we started with quiet reflection, song and prayer at St. Brigid's well on the eve. We welcomed friends and strangers from near and far on St. Brigid's day. It was wonderful to see so many wanting to weave a St. Brigid's cross and even more wonderful to witness the delight on their faces as they left showcasing their self-crafted cross.



We had a week-long programme of creative events which included a workshop on the traditions and customs associated with St. Brigid, a harp recital which treated all to a taste of Ireland's unique harping heritage, a Celtic lecture titled “This Sacred Universe”. Other events included eucharist at St. Brigid's well, sacred dance, workshop on ecology, floral art demonstration, meditation, a conversation about St. Brigid in Europe and a celebration of local poets, musicians, and writers at Kildare Town library.

The Feile culminated with a magical concert featuring Steve Cooney and Cormac Breatnach followed by the Afri Justice and Peace Conference which had as its theme ‘Rekindling; Revitalizing; Rewilding; Restoring’ – a wonderful, informative and challenging day on the need to care for Planet Earth, our common home.

Seeds of various kinds are sown at this Conference each year and shoots of new life spring up in unexpected ways and places in the aftermath of each Feile Bríde.



What has been Happening in 2020

Plan and Prepare

When March arrived, the world changed and it resulted in us having to close the centre until the beginning of July. This meant cancellations of pilgrimages, events, workshops and confirmation retreats. However, we used this time to plan and prepare. We developed a comprehensive Covid 19 Policy for Solas Bhríde and have received the Failte Ireland Covid 19 Safety Charter. We reviewed the past five years and proceeded to develop a strategic plan for the next three years. Members of Cairde Bhríde formed three teams to assist with the development of programs and events, a communications and social media strategy and hospitality at Solas Bhríde. With their invaluable assistance, we look to the future with positivity and a renewed sense of enthusiasm.



Meditation and Heritage Online



When you could not physically come to us, we used the power of social media to be with you. During this time, we took the opportunity to develop a meditative walk around the grounds. We posted reflections, thoughts and comments on our Facebook page. We marked Heritage week with the development of a video with a member of Cairde Bhríde on the customs and traditions associated with weaving of St. Brigid's cross. We carried on our tradition of celebrating the seasons by creating a video for Autumn Equinox while at Samhain we shared three short reflections on Facebook. We finish the year with a further four reflections during the season of Advent shared on Facebook and with a celebration of the Winter Solstice and Christmas.



2020 for us was a year of learning to adapt to a new reality. We look ahead to a new year filled with the possibility of bringing new ideas to how we operate and the services we have to offer as we go into the future.

A thought for 2021

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness. Desmond Tutu

Wishing each one a very happy New Year.

Launch of Meditative Walk.



Margaret, Brenda and Kevin at work .

This year we developed a Meditative Walk around the grounds of Solas Bhride. On this walk you can take some time to walk mindfully, pause at each of the significant points along the way, take time to walk the Labyrinth, reflect at the Willow bower, enjoy the scents of the herb garden or rest in the Brigid Room within which sits the Brigid Flame, beacon of Hope, Justice and Peace.



Other Significant Moments

Solas Bhride team were invited to prepare a ritual and create a sacred space for the opening of a Trocaire Conference for the Dioceses of Kildare & Leighlin, Ferns and Ossory. It was led by the Laudato Si desk of Trocaire. The theme of the conference was Climate Action.

Solas Bhride featured in an article in the Tablet during October. The author of the article Laura Whelan had to cancel her plans to visit the Centre due to Covid 19. However, she hopes to be able to spend some time at one of our hermitages next year.

In May Solas Bhride was also mentioned in the Irish Independent in an article which focused on coping with lockdown.

Feile Bríde 2021 Brigid: Flame of Justice and Peace January 31st—February 7th

Innovation for 29th Féile Bríde

As we start to plan our 29th Féile Bríde we are aware of the challenge that Covid19 brings us for our annual event. While there may be restrictions, we are also hopeful of an opportunity to reach out online to more people than ever. As always, we want to welcome all to know and be inspired by St Brigid whose legacy is ever more relevant for our world today.

We hope that many of our events will take place online and will be widely accessible. We are still in the planning phase but hope to bring a rich experience to you using the technology at our disposal, thus allowing you to immerse yourselves in the experience of Féile Bríde from your own home, in Ireland or indeed anywhere around the world.

We hope to include in our program reflection, meditation and rituals from St. Brigid’s Well both during the darkness of the eve and the daylight of the beginning of Spring. Our schedule of events is starting to take shape and we hope to include lectures on the customs and traditions of Brigid, ecology matters, a Celtic lecture, and an exploration of a legend of Brigid. The Afri conference will move to a zoom event with a list of quality speakers.

The complete programme will be finalised in early January and we will share the news on our website and on Facebook. We will be inviting you to book for the events of your choice and hope to welcome as many participants as possible this year.

Events at the Centre

If circumstances allow, small groups may be invited to Solas Bhride to participate in some events e.g. weaving of St Brigid’s crosses. These events will be advertised separately closer to the time.

Hermitage Stays

Our Hermitage bookings were up on the previous year with a variety of guests from Ireland and abroad coming to avail of some quiet time for reflection, rest, silence or prayer. We welcomed writers, poets, religious and people who just wanted some time away from a busy world. Our hermitages were booked out in July when we re-opened and bookings for August were very good. However, as Kildare went back into lockdown in August this resulted in cancellations. We look forward to welcoming guests to our hermitages once again in 2021

Thank you

We express our gratitude to the Board of Directors, Solas Bhride Team and to Cairde Bhride for their exceptional support and involvement in the running of the Centre. We also acknowledge the contribution of CKLP Tus Scheme participants.

Donors and Benefactors

We remember our pilgrims, visitors and benefactors in prayer at this time. We remember all, living and deceased who have been part of the story of Solas Bhride and who helped to make the Centre what it is today.

News Alert

2023 –2024 promises to be a momentous year for Kildare and the wider community. We will be celebrating the 1500th anniversary of St. Brigid’s death. Plans are at an early stage. Our website will keep you informed of developments for the celebration. www.solasbhride.ie.



“The Word is living, being, spirit, all verdant greening, all creativity. This Word manifests itself in every creature.”

— Hildegard of Bingen