

**Iona linked with
Kilfinichen
Kilvickeon and
the
Ross of Mull**



Parish Profile

**The churches in this vacancy are all inclusive, and we
welcome any applicant**



View of Iona village

This parish lies amidst the beautiful physical environment of the Inner Hebrides. The area has an extraordinary cultural heritage, including the historical legacy of the Isle of Iona which is globally famous as the birthplace of Christianity in Scotland and the burial place of more than 50 kings and queens. Both Iona and Mull continue to be places of pilgrimage, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the world each year.

The churches of the parish serve dynamic and vibrant local communities, which are small (177 permanent residents on Iona and 750 on the Ross of Mull), but in many respects growing and thriving. Iona, for instance, has a rising population, increased year-round occupancy of homes and a falling average age. The school roll has risen by 183% in five years, the largest percentage increase in Oban, Lorne and the Isles.

Life in the parishes is underpinned by strong, active community organisations. Local people work together energetically in these organisations and in an array of committees to develop the area socially and economically in ways that are sustainable and beneficial to the community. There is a broad ecumenical scene, including the presence of Iona Community, Roman Catholic, Episcopal and Quakers and a Baptist Church in Buessan on the Ross of Mull and we work well with these groups. In this setting there is exciting potential for leadership that reaches out and increased the contribution of the church in the surrounding communities and brings new life and growth to the church.

Here, as in every parish across Scotland, what is needed most is for the grace and power of the resurrected Jesus to make an impact on the lives of people, young and old, residents and visitors alike. The Church of Scotland along with other Christian denominations and groups has the privilege and responsibility of witnessing to the resurrection in this beautiful place. There are two congregations, Iona linked with Kilfinichen, Kilvickeon and the Ross of Mull. The pattern of worship is two services each Sunday, one on Iona and one in either Buessan or in Creich.



Iona Parish Church

The parish church and manse on Iona were built in 1828 to a design by Thomas Telford. One of the Parliamentary churches built across the highlands and islands at this time, so called because their construction was financed by a grant from Parliament—as an expression of gratitude to God for victory in the Napoleonic wars. This building was in use on Iona some 70 years before the Abbey Church was restored in 1905.



St, Ernan's Church, Creich

St Ernan's church Creich was dedicated in 1899 for the population of the Ross of Mull. This was an outreach from Iona and continued to be served by Iona's resident minister until the retirement of Rev Harry Miller in 1985. Following his retirement discussions with the Presbytery of Argyll led to combining the Ross of Mull with Kilfinichen and Kilvickeon and declaring Iona a separate but linked parish.

MISSION STATEMENT

To become a welcoming place where the love of God works

Ministry Opportunities:

Rural ministry offers opportunities to become deeply involved with the lives of both church members and the community beyond the walls of the church. The Minister is often invited to participate in community events. For the right person this provides a delightful sphere of Christian service and mission among warm hearted people with potential to expand and renew the Church

Pastoral:

The life events of birth, marriage and death provide opportunities for pastoral ministry. The funeral load is not heavy - 8 in the last year. There were 5 weddings 2014/2015, both of local people and of visitors. On Iona prior permission of Historic Scotland must be obtained to be married in the Abbey Church or ancillary buildings. This does not, of course, apply to weddings in the parish church on Iona. Elderly care provides an opportunity for pastoral ministry and a number of elderly people are cared for in the community by family and carers. There is a small cottage hospital in Craignure and a general hospital in Oban.



Bunessan Parish Church

Bunessan church was built in 1804 as the village became established and is said to include some of the stones from the medieval Kilvickeon building. Today Bunessan Church serves the congregation from the centre of the village.

Schools:

There are two Primary Schools, in Bunessan and Iona. Iona school has 21 pupils (including pre-5s) currently, almost trebling over the past five years and Bunessan has 50 (including pre-5s). In addition there are regular end of term services, usually held in the church. There is potential for growth or regrowth of the Sunday schools. Special events have included; 'Experience Christmas'—run by church volunteers in Bunessan Community Hall and attended by all the pupils of both Primary Schools; Christmas and Easter Fun days—one day holiday club events; and a Summer Holiday club with SU volunteers held in July 2015.

The secondary school is in Oban with the pupils from the Ross of Mull and Iona living in the hostel there from Monday to Friday. This makes work with older children more challenging and is an area where further development is needed.



Outreach:

Work with primary aged children has been developed during the Interim Ministry period with great support from Argyll Presbytery (through Rev Paul Beautyman, youth advisor) and from Scripture Union. We have participated in a Christmas Fun day run by SU in Salen and have run our own Easter Fun day in the parish. The SU run Holiday Club held in July 2015 in the Ross of Mull was a great success and well attended.

Outreach to adults has largely been through special services tied to the festivals of Easter and Christmas, and through Lent and Advent groups. These groups have run weekly for 4 week periods and have attracted some not otherwise part of the church community.

The Gaelic services in 2015 were very positively received and attended by a good number of people not usually in church.

One of the challenges of the parishes is how to effectively reach out to the wider community and the thousands of visitors who come in the summer—a challenge that remains!

Statistics for Mission Information:

Ross of Mull:

http://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/statistics_for_mission/parish_profiles/211306.pdf

Iona:

http://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/statistics_for_mission/parish_profiles/211303.pdf

Worship:

Two services are held each Sunday and form the backbone of the worship life of the congregations. There are other seasonal worship opportunities, Remembrance, School services, Holy Week, World Day of Prayer, Harvest, Christian Aid week, Christmas etc. The size of the Sunday congregations varies, but is generally around 15-20 people, both on Mull and on Iona. The services have followed a fairly traditional format although interactive elements as well as occasional use of film or sound clips have also been enjoyed by the congregation and local musicians both on Iona and the Ross of Mull provide accompaniment, which includes violin and flute. Gaelic language services are held twice a year in Bunessan Parish Church and the Baptist church at Bunessan

Rev. Liz Gibson, Locum Minister resides at Lochdon on the Isle of Mull and is currently doing one day a week during the vacancy.

The parish:

The parish is called by the old and much loved local names of Kilfinichen and Kilvickeon, but neither of these two former places of worship are in use today. There are ruins of the medieval church of Kilvickeon situated about two miles SE of Bunessan. This building is contemporary with the nunnery buildings on Iona and constructed in the same style, including the presence of the strange 'Sheela na gig' figure built into the wall of the church.



Easter Service on Fionnphort Beach



Balfour's Bay, Erraid (location for Robert Louis Stevenson's Kidnapped)

Interim Ministry:

Interim Ministry has been operating in the Church of Scotland since 1997 and more than 40 congregations have been served by Interim Ministers. It can be used when the judgement of both the presbytery and a vacant congregation is that to proceed immediately to call a minister in the usual way may not be the most helpful course. The reasons for making an Interim Ministry application would include: following a very long ministry, or a very short one, a major change in the parish, a re-adjustment decision or conflict of some sort.

In May 2013 the congregations, with agreement from the Presbytery of Argyll, decided to request an Interim Ministry. Leading up to this there had been significant levels of conflict with some leaving the church. The causes of these things are always complex, but they included mismatch of expectations and poor communication. The resulting breakdown in relationships caused hurt both to the individuals involved and to the reputation of the church.

During the period of Interim Ministry of Rev. John Collard from October 2013 to July 2015, a number of issues have been addressed and some of this is reflected in the Mission Statement, adopted by both Kirk Sessions in January 2015. Part of the process of Interim Ministry is to establish with the congregation a set of Aims and Objectives which then guide the priorities and provide a measure of progress in the Interim Ministry. These are the Aims and Objectives of the Interim Ministry in Iona l/w Kilfinichen and Kilvickeon and the Ross of Mull:



Winter Sunset, Ross of Mull

Coming to terms with history:

- Recognize the sense of confusion arising within each congregation from past years. Acknowledge the frailty of the human spirit, and the wideness of God's mercy, forgiveness and healing.
- Recognising that there will always be areas of disagreement, reflect on the ways these are handled that are respectful, graceful and honest.
- Encourage each Kirk Session to address issues of leadership, responsibility and communication, to define the role of the eldership within each congregation, and for them to intimate to their congregations a statement of purpose/intention for the future.

Discovering our new identity:

- Reflect in all appropriate ways on what it means to be a church that is welcoming, inclusive and non-judgemental.
- Explore ways of initiating contact with families, and building relationships with children and young people.
- Explore the possibilities for the mission of the congregations e.g. - new groups, school work, bible study and prayer. Encourage the involvement of both elders and members in the leadership of such groups. Invite the Presbytery of Argyll to provide support and training when needed.
- Explore ways each congregation can learn more of the other congregations, to hear both their joys and their challenges and to build ways of sharing good news and practice.

- For the Kirk Sessions to review service times and reflect on how these could change to encourage both new ways of worship, and new people to come to worship. Reflect on the impact of both present and any future service times for a minister and their family.

Planning for the future:

- As a priority, ensure that there are open modes of communication between elders within each congregation, and open modes of communication between congregations.
- Consider how any emerging new sense of energy and purpose can be communicated to the community at large.
- Ensure that there is a clear avenue of contact with the Presbytery of Argyll.
- Ensure that there are clear systems of support in place for a minister and family.



The Manse

The Manse is a comfortable 1985 built bungalow just outside the village of Bunessan on the Assapol Road. It is 10 minutes walk from the village and 5 minutes walk from Bunessan School. It has a modern kitchen and bathroom, lounge, dining room, four bedrooms (one could be made as a study), with plenty of storage. It has mains water and electricity and phone/broadband along with bottled gas supply and septic tank drainage.

New double glazed PVC windows were installed in 2014 and additional insulation added to the loft and the hot water tank. There are electric storage heaters and an open fire in the lounge which also heats the hot water. There is in addition an electric immersion heater. An Energy Performance Certificate for the building is available on request. There is also a two-room Manse flat on Iona, housed within the Iona Heritage Centre.



Parishes of Iona linked with Kilfinichen, Kilvickeon and the Ross of Mull

For further information, please contact:

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Iona Christmas Eve Carol Service