

# BOARD OF THE IONA COMMUNITY

May 2017

## PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the report and thank the Board.
2. Congratulate the Iona Community on the opening of its new Glasgow centre and the development of programme activities promoting peace and justice.
3. Commend the proposed refurbishment plans for Iona Abbey and encourage church members and congregations to support the *Sanctuary and Light – Iona Abbey Appeal*.
4. Congratulate the new Leader of the Iona Community, Dr Michael Marten, and wish him well; and thank Rev Peter Macdonald for his service over the past eight years.

## REPORT

### 1. Introduction

*'I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink,  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me,  
I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me'.*

(Matthew 25:35-36)

Core Christian principles of hospitality and justice, were challenged and mocked by events at home and abroad in 2016. Our membership in the UK, in EU countries and elsewhere in Europe, were deeply troubled by the EU Referendum campaign, its result and aftermath. Racism and xenophobia lurked beneath the surface of public debate fuelled by tabloid rhetoric which has led to an increase in racially motivated attacks, antisemitism and Islamophobia.

The election of the new president was equally troubling for members and associates in the United States and indeed for the world. *The Washington Post* reported that 81% of white US Evangelical Christians and a majority of white voters of all backgrounds, classes and gender voted for the candidate who boasted of sexually assaulting women, supporting torture and who turned economic resentments and genuine grievances into blame, fear and racial resentment.

The distortion of Christian values leads us all to wonder how we might counter fake news with the Good News and how prayer might move us to active resistance.

Pope Francis in his New Year message declared,

*"The new year will be good in the measure in which each of us, with the help of God, tries to do good, day by day, that's how peace is created".*

The membership of the Iona Community is dedicated to 'doing good' and thus to witness to our faith this and every

year. We seek to build bridges strengthening relationships and communities. We actively seek to cross societal boundaries, bringing together people of diverse backgrounds -of class, age, race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and ethnic origin - in sensitive but creatively provocative encounters. This is one of our key aims, affirmed in our strategic review, across all that we do as movement and as organisation - in our work with young people, in our programme of activities in Glasgow and elsewhere, in our campaigning for justice and peace and in our centres on Iona and Mull. There we offer transformational residential experiences to guests, drawn from all walks of life and from throughout the world, and to our volunteers and resident staff.

Members and associates of the Iona Community have long been activists in the Church and in local communities: serving on Kirk Sessions and Parish Councils, leading youth groups and visiting the elderly, offering hospitality to asylum seekers and staffing food banks, contributing to campaign groups and political parties. We all learn and grow from such experiences and encounters - and the walls that divide us fall.

## 2. The Work of our Glasgow Centre

### 2.1 Pat Bennett, Programme Development Worker, reports:

The move to new base at Carlton Court in February is a significant affirmation of the Community's work in Glasgow. The Glasgow centre enables a fresh programme of events to be offered in a new venue space. The *weeWONDERBOX* was launched in May by Wild Goose Resource Group and the Community's Programme team. Having our own 'event space' has enabled the Community to offer a regular programme of public events and at Pentecost our *weeWONDERBOX* programme was launched. The programme aims to provide incarnational, face-to-face public occasions where people can engage with the pressing issues and challenges of God's world.

The programme is built around a weekly Wednesday evening liturgy at 6.30 pm; a public act of worship open to

all. On the last Wednesday of each month, this takes the form of a service for healing and laying on of hands.

The liturgy is often followed by a further *weeWONDERBOX* event and in 2016 we have enabled several series including - 'Missing Women' (biblical explorations); 'Invisible Church' (book discussion); 'Strangers and Friends' (exploring the issues around asylum seekers and refugees); 'Saving Jesus' (a 12-session DVD-based small group course exploring Jesus). We have also held 'Starter for 10' conversations on 'Practising Faith in Health' and 'Practising Faith in Science' as preludes to planned series in 2017. Other 'one-off' events have included - a visit from Malawian farmers involved in the Kilombero rice project; a presentation in still photography and live music about the lives of the Zabbaleen of Cairo; a 'Mibbes Aye, Mibbes Naw' discussion prior to the EU referendum; a daytime Advent retreat. Further additions to the mix of events are being added.

We have co-led a variety of tailor-made training days in aspects of liturgy with visiting groups from Denmark, Finland, Germany and USA, and have a number of groups booked in for similar programmes in 2017. We expect that requests for such events may increase now that we have our own venue. Programmes with such groups have included, by request, sessions exploring different aspects of the Iona Community's history, spirituality, political and social action. They have also seen us do a variety of different pilgrimages round Glasgow reflecting on both the history of the Community and of the City itself and the intersections between history, social justice and spirituality.

We also enjoy some relaxing and socialising! Our monthly Friday evening 'Social Box', featuring board games, music, quizzes and other entertainment, is proving a family-friendly regular.

We are looking to consolidate and expand the *weeWONDERBOX* programme in 2017, building up what is run in Glasgow and working to encourage and support

Community members outside of the central belt in setting up their own *weeWONDERBOX* events.

## 2.2 Wild Goose Resource Group Report:

The final Holy City worship and workshop events took place in 2016. After a successful 15-year run, the planning team agreed that Holy City should draw to a close. Energies are now being put towards the progression into new adventures, with some members of the former planning team being involved in *weeWONDERBOX* as mentioned above.

Inspired by the justice, peace and radical hospitality at the heart of our Christian faith, we helped coordinate a programme of workshops, worship and storytelling for Solas Festival 2016. As the Just Peace Partnership, WGRG and Iona Community shared a venue with The Church of Scotland, The Corrymeela Community, A Place for Hope, Christian Aid and The Progressive Christianity Network.

This year, Greenbelt Festival made a special request for the 'Northern Lights' partnership to be resurrected after a two year absence, a great affirmation of our contribution to the festival. Comprising WGRG, Iona Community, Church Action on Poverty, Corrymeela Community and Fischy Music, the Northern Lights venue flourished with a variety of small-scale workshops, music, worship, art activities, justice café and more.

Outwith Northern Lights, WGRG did our usual Big Sing, which attracted hundreds of voices, and John Bell was invited again to deliver talks. We also did a late night Holy City worship and Wee Sing, and supported Iona Community friends in further worship events as part of the main Greenbelt programme.

Jo Love and Graham Maule led weekends exploring worship in Forres and Larne, and took Holy City to Edinburgh's Nitekirk and a Glasgow University conference. They were asked by the Church of Scotland to become mentors for the Priority Areas 'Chance to Thrive' project, and assigned a congregation each to work with, assisting in developing a vision of the congregation's role in the

local community. Also with the Church of Scotland, Jo has continued to enjoy serving on the 'Resourcing Worship' group of the Mission & Discipleship Council and being involved in the Priority Areas Holiday Week and Big Conversation, and more ecumenically, working for a third year with the Scottish Committee of the World Day of Prayer.

WGRG facilitated our annual week on Iona in July, 'Of Flesh & Bones' and Jo was back on Iona to lead art and creative thinking workshops at the summer and autumn Iona Community Members' weeks. Jo's development of thought and practice in art and spirituality has been stretched and greatly enhanced by her undertaking of a one-year course at Leith School of Art, completed in June.

There is ongoing interest in the work of WGRG in North America and John continues to be invited by churches and educational bodies to lead events and courses in that region. He has been working on a new book of song texts which can be sung to familiar tunes, to be published initially by GIA in Chicago.

WGRG material is in demand in other places around the globe, too. A 'Petit livre de célébrations', a French edition of A Wee Worship Book, has been produced, and firm links with the Danish Church are being established.

The latest recording from the Wild Goose Collective, 'Enemy of Apathy', was released in January, about twenty seven years after the songbook of the same name... However, since several of the songs have never gone out of currency, and some are enjoying a second wind, we thought it appropriate to make a collection of those not, in the main, recorded elsewhere.

## 2.3 Chris Long, Youth Resource Worker, reports:

In 2016 we continued in our work with young people with a familiar mix of residential and locally based youth work, blending faith, politics and activism. As a community we took brave steps, together, to try new things, explore difficult issues and open our lives to others. We are all the stronger for it.

This year also brought with it unexpected factors that shaped the work we did together. Sadly we said goodbye to Sarah Evans, one of our youth workers, and we thank her for her work. We have not been able to reappoint so there has been a reduced capacity within the staff working with young people but recognise that the committed work of the volunteers has meant that the effects of this were not felt by the young people.

Our new base in Glasgow has enabled fresh opportunities in hosting young people and running innovative events. The true value of this was apparent over the weekend of the Iona Community's AGM as we were able to run a parallel programme for young people in our new 'home'. The weekend allowed for some magnificent work;

- we had our own debate about Brexit and the frustration of not being able to vote in that referendum,
- we agreed as a group to support the 'TIE' Campaign as they work for inclusive education that reflects the experiences of those in the LGBT+ community
- we were all able to participate in, and some of us to lead, the act of worship to 'hansel' the new offices with members of the Iona Community.

Our work in Priesthill continues running a community art group in partnership with the URC congregation there. Danica Kramer and Georgina Shields have taken responsibility for the group and fostered a real bond with the young people who attend. They have skilfully encouraged the young people to be creative and express themselves – showing them that art is so much more than being the 'best at drawing'. Together they produced great pieces about 'Peace' and those that have worked to protect it in the past and created their own comic.

A true highlight of the year was all we were able to do together as part of the Youth Festival on Iona in August. We framed the weeks programme around the theme of "Speaking truth to power" as we lived, laughed and worshiped together through the week. The creativity and

care that was put into that programme by the volunteer team leading the week was admirable and its positive impact on the young people was notable. Difficult conversations were had about how we reflect on where our own values come from and how we truly listen to those that think differently from us, all in the safe setting created by the team.

The momentum created by such events led to young people we work with in Glasgow forming a new group. *IGLOW* began in October and is already a distinct and engaged youth group unlike anything seen elsewhere in the city. It is intentionally diverse in its make up with young people with a thirst to make the world a better place and understand the challenging issues faced by different individuals and communities. The group is striving to be more politically engaged, empathetic and creative in how they live and it is a joy to support them as they grow.

We rounded off 2016 with a weekend in Glasgow which drew together the young people in our network from across the UK. This weekend was a perfect snapshot of our work and why it works - we laughed together, we lamented the difficult parts of the year past, we hoped for better things in the year ahead, we ate pizza, we sat up late and talked nonsense and got up early to share deep truths – all in all it was tiring and it was very definitely worth it.

We look ahead with hope – to build on all that we have achieved this year, which continues to serve as a reminder of what a massive force for good young people are when given support and opportunity.

#### **2.4 Sandra Kramer, Publishing Manager Wild Goose Publication, reports:**

Wild Goose Publications continues to produce high quality books and downloads in a very difficult commercial environment. The development of ebooks and downloads has proved popular but traditional publications remain significant. A good part of the year was spent working on the new *Iona Abbey Worship Book*, which will be published in February 2017. This thorough revision of the services held in the Abbey contains about 80% new

material, which has been developed by members of the Iona Community since the previous edition.

### **New books**

Enemy of Apathy (CD), Wild Goose Collective & Hinba; Dancing in the Desert, Sally Foster-Fulton; Walking Our Story, Joy Mead; The Soft Petals of Grace, Thom M Shuman; A Pocket Full of Crumbs, Jan Sutch Pickard; Open Our Eyes, Ann Gerondelis; Winter, Ruth Burgess.

### **E-books**

Dancing in the Desert; Walking Our Story; The Soft Petals of Grace; A Pocket Full of Crumbs; Open Our Eyes; Winter.

### **Original downloads**

Downloads available at ionabooks.com include resources for Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter, Pentecost and also Holocaust memorial Day, International Women's Day and Racial Justice.

### **Downloads from books included:**

- *From Acorn and Archangels:*  
Enjoy the Earth Gently, Various contributors; Women's Stories, Various contributors; Angels, Various contributors
- *From Blessed Be Our Table:*  
Each Time We Eat, Various contributors
- *From Winter:*  
Songs for Winter, Various contributors

As ever, we have many new projects in the pipeline and we look forward to bringing these to our readership with quality and grace.

### **2.5 Neil Paynter, Editor report on Coracle:**

The Iona Community's magazine, Coracle, in its new all-colour design, is published quarterly, along with a regular e-bulletin, e-Coracle, providing up-to-date news and topical views. Both are circulated worldwide, keeping readers informed of the life and work of the Community, offering resources for reflection and worship and giving

a platform for the sharing of provocative and diverse perspectives on global and local issues of social justice.

After six years in post, our Support Services Manager, Robert Swinfen, moved on to work for SCIAF. We are tremendously grateful for all that Robert has done in managing the business side of the Community, and wish him well in his new post.

## **3. The Work of our Islands Centres**

### **3.1 Rosie Magee, Centres Director, Iona Abbey and MacLeod Centre, reports:**

In 2016 the Iona Centres welcomed thousands of guests and scores of volunteers from all over the world. No two weeks are ever the same – even as the rhythm of our weeks carries a familiar pattern. The centres have been providing hospitality to pilgrims for decades yet the community created during each week is distinct unto itself – dependent on the contribution of each unique individual present, as well as the local variables (most notably the weather!) and events on the world stage. It is a privilege to see God at work in our midst and in God's economy the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts. Through both 'Gathering Space' weeks and themed weeks we seek to be intentional in how we operate, providing a structure in and through which people can fully experience the gifts and challenge of their time at the Abbey Centre or MacLeod Centre. Guests bring 'new insights and energy' and their feedback is valued. Last year one guest reflected that:

*'[The centres] have created a process that works and are wise enough to trust that process, to lean into that process, and thus the wisdom of years held in a sense by the rule and even the rules bearing the divine presence for us, to us, among us. Beyond this you've given me one more hope. That as I set out to journey to this next place, I may be delightfully surprised when the loss of that which I have loved is replaced by the new thing God offers.'*

Of course the scale of our activities, and the large number of variables, means that things do not always go according

to plan. I have come to experience ever more fully that the cutting edge of our ministry is found in that place where we have had to let go of Plan A and move through the alphabet with as much grace as possible. In the midst of change attention to the ballast of organisational ethos is vital. Its impact is as tangible as the balance sheet, the weather, or the condition of the Abbey roof. In the midst of prevailing economic realities it can be tempting to operate from a stance of scarcity. Yet that would deny the reality of God's abundance and the expansive mind-set we are called to hold as our compass.

It is a joy and privilege to be a part of the story of the Iona centres. At time of writing we are in the midst of recruiting staff and volunteers for the 2017 season and processing guest bookings. As plans for the refurbishment project progress there is an additional layer of activity. This is an exciting time - the season lies ahead with all the promise and potential that entails. We look forward to seeing who will be called to Iona's shores.

Iona has long been a place of sending as well as of welcome. That will be truer than ever this year as we close the centres in the autumn for the refurbishment of the Abbey. One chapter in the life of the centres is ending to make room for the beginning of a new chapter with new vision. There will be threads of continuity – most importantly through continuing daily services of worship at the Abbey and also through the Iona Community Welcome Centre and Shop. George MacLeod's much loved expression of Iona being a 'thin place where only tissue paper separates the material from the spiritual' comes to mind. Whether pilgrims leave this place after a week, a month or a year we are called to go out into the world and join in God's work of creating a 'thin' world.

### **3.2 Sanctuary and Light – the Iona Abbey Appeal**

In partnership with Historic Environment Scotland and the Iona Cathedral Trust, the Iona Community is undertaking an exciting renovation project to improve the accessibility, flexibility and sustainability of all the facilities within the Abbey guest accommodation.

As noted in last year's report, fifty years on from the completion of the rebuilding, the physical environment of the Abbey now needs to be redeveloped to meet the expectations and challenges of the present day. Exciting plans have been drawn up which will:

- Create a new guest entrance and install a lift to ensure that the building is accessible to all.
- Create inviting spaces including redesigned bedrooms and bathrooms, and flexible communal areas.
- Improve lighting and design in corridors and public spaces to aid access and mobility.
- Improved insulation and a install a renewable heating system.
- Redesign the kitchen, servery and refectory layout.
- Share the story of the rebuilding of the Abbey through new interpretation panels and interactive displays.

The Iona Community has launched an appeal – Sanctuary and Light – to raise the £2.7m necessary to undertake this vital work and to ensure its future work and witness.

### **3.3 Abbi Mason, Coordinator, Camas Centre, reports:**

After a turbulent start to the 2016 season, with all staff being new to their roles, we worked extremely hard to ensure our guests enjoyed a positive and rewarding experience of Camas.

We had a full season with lots of returning groups and familiar faces. In early spring we had work week and held Junior Youth Festival for the first time then had a run of returning groups, two from the United States of America, Glasgow University and the Grassmarket community project from Edinburgh. School holidays saw a whirlwind of our long standing youth groups; SiMY from Townhead, St Pauls from Blackhill, The Barn from Govan, GK Experience from across Glasgow, CRE8 from Macclesfield, and Iona Community Kids. These weeks were the highlights of the summer, the groups feel at home as most

have been to Camas on numerous occasions and take ownership of their week - and can cope with doing the dishes.

Faith in Through Care, a returning adult group from Glasgow that support ex-offenders, was a particularly challenging week

The season finished well and we had an incredibly productive three weeks. Garden week saw the building of a cobb pizza oven. New Caledonian Woodlands helped us transport materials for our new woodland site. Work Week closing camas for the winter went well thanks to the hard graft of five lads from Muirhouse and a group from the International Volunteer Service.

At the beginning of the year Jon Lloyd moved on after four years as Centre Co-ordinator, a period of significant development and achievement. We are grateful to Jon for his leadership and friendship. The staff team comprised of Hannah Blyth, Rhyddian Knight, Laura Gamwell and myself. Laura is now on maternity leave and a maternity cover has been appointed and a fifth resident will soon be appointed for the 2017 season.

The volunteers were a fantastic bunch and poured in an enormous amount of energy to the season. We were lucky to have previous volunteers step in to fill gaps at various points through the season. Thank you to all our resident staff and volunteers.

### **3.4 Access Fund**

In 2016 the Iona Community utilised £17,945 of the Access Fund and spent an additional £25,192 of general funds offering subsidised stays on Iona and at Camas. This is a total of £43,137 – an increase from 2015 because the Youth Festival and Junior Youth Festival were successful in attracting more people living in poverty.

## **4. Our Wider Work**

### **4.1 Rosemary Power, Prayer Circle Co-ordinator, reports:**

I took over responsibility for the Prayer Circle in January

2016, and with administrative support from our Glasgow office, I ensure:

- Everyone, sponsor or intercessor, receives the Prayer Circle newsletter;
- Intercessors receive, as they have requested, between one and seven prayer lists, each of which has up to 12 people or situations requiring prayer;
- About 100 members receive their list(s) and the newsletter whether by post or email.

The intercessors live across the world. Many are elderly and the Prayer Circle is a major commitment of their time, energy, and spiritual commitment, but through it intercessors make a significant contribution to the life and witness of the Iona Community. Some are Members or part of the wider movement, while others volunteer as a result of a visit to the Iona centres.

The newsletter and updated lists are sent out every two months. There is considerable overlap between the people prayed for, the sponsors requesting prayer for people and situations, and the intercessors. In all about 600 people are involved. Intercessors are committed to regular prayer for the people on the list(s) to which they are connected; and many observe a special time of prayer to correlate with the 9 pm service on Tuesdays in Iona abbey.

The Prayer Circle coordinates closely with the Sacristan of Iona Abbey to ensure that urgent requests are added to the prayers for healing on Tuesday evenings. In addition, there is now a group of a small group who pray for urgent requests between the two-month mailings.

A new leaflet was produced, with the assistance of Alex O'Neill, the Community's marketing manager. This is available in print copy, on Iona, in the Glasgow office and elsewhere, and online on the website. A series of short liturgies has been produced on nine themes. Each can be photocopied and are intended for private or small-group use by the intercessors and sponsors. These, and the

leaflet, will be available in January 2017. In addition, these liturgies together with material from other contributors and sources are to appear as a Wild Goose download again early in 2017.

#### **4.2 Israel-Palestine Working Group**

The Iona Community's statement on Israel-Palestine was initiated by a working group of Community Members with, between them, many decades of experience and considerable expertise of working for justice in Israel-Palestine. It followed several years of listening to the experiences of Christians and others in Israel-Palestine, in particular those whose suffering was expressed in the Kairos Palestine document.

The statement was developed over a period of many months of study, reflection, prayer and consultation with Iona Community Members, those with responsibility within the Community, with friends in both the Jewish and Palestinian communities in Scotland, and friends in Israel and Palestine. It makes clear the Iona Community's opposition to theologies and practices that are either anti-Semitic or Zionist and explicitly supports nonviolent resistance to occupation and settler colonialism. The statement is, unapologetically, a challenge to those who collude in systems and practices of oppression, and in this instance, particularly of our Palestinian sisters and brothers.

Iona Community members and associates have a long history of challenging oppressive regimes in places such as Malawi and South Africa, in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The Community would betray that legacy were it not to speak out against the illegal actions of the Israeli Government and to recognise the historic role Britain has played in the geo-politics of the region.

The Iona Community invites those who are unhappy with the statement to study the Kairos Palestine document. It starts with talk of peace and then about responsibility for peace – a theology of justice. The Kairos Palestine document also includes the invitation of the Palestinian Christians themselves to 'come and see', pray with them

and travel the same journey that the Iona Community has undertaken.

#### **4.3 Membership**

Fourteen new members were welcomed into full membership at the Hallowing Service held on Iona in August. Currently, there are eighteen people on the New Members Programme. Full membership now stands at 280 with 1486 Associate Members and 865 Friends worldwide. Iona Community groups continue to grow, particularly in the Netherlands, with groups meeting regularly in Austria, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and the USA. The fifth Europe-wide gathering will be held in Salzburg in September 2017.

The Leader of the Iona Community, Peter Macdonald, completes his eight-year term of office in July 2017. It is hoped that the new Leader will be introduced when the Board reports to the General Assembly.

The Leader meets with the Board twice a year to provide updates on the life of the Community and to reflect with the Board representatives from different denominations and groups. Over the last eight years, the Board has appreciated Peter's passion for the Iona Community and his embodiment of the values of the Community. Peter has encouraged the Community in serving and supporting a wide range of people through work, worship and campaigning at the Island Centres, from Glasgow, throughout Scotland and around the world.

During Peter's time of leadership, the Community has maintained a strong focus on social justice and climate justice. It has also marked the 1450th anniversary of Columba's arrival on Iona and the 75th anniversary of the founding of the community and there has been a renewed emphasis on maintaining good relations with the residents of Iona. Peter has encouraged the community through a membership review, through a move of Glasgow base which has opened up wonderful new opportunities and in working towards a new vision for the Abbey and McLeod Centre on Iona. The Board thanks

Peter for his dynamic leadership and wishes him well for the future.

Every 31<sup>st</sup> day of its monthly prayer cycle, the Community remembers those who have died since its formation in 1938 and prays 'tell them we love them and miss them'. Last year the names of Zam Walker, URC minister in Greenock, Helen Steven, peace activist and Quaker, Danus

Skene, educator and politician, Brian Brown, teacher and campaigner, were added to that list. In the communion of the saints, an ever-present reality for the Iona Community, we are not divided. We give great thanks.

*In the name of the Board.*

ALAN W D KIMMITT, *Convener*  
PETER J MACDONALD, *Leader*