

**IONA COMMUNITY BOARD – MAY 2023****Proposed Deliverance****The General Assembly:**

1. Receive the Report.
2. Commend the Assembly Trustees for the work being done on issues of Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity, and the Faith Impact Forum for its research into the Historic Legacy of Slavery, and urge all Church people to continue to take appropriate action on these issues at a local, regional and national level (*Section 2.4*).
3. Urge the Church at all levels to remain informed, vigilant and engaged with issues of justice and peace for Israelis and Palestinians, and to use its voice to condemn illegality and violence wherever these are apparent (*Section 2.10*).
4. Deplore the continued escalation of war in Ukraine and in other parts of the world, and the use of language that dehumanises victims and distances us from the horror of war (*Section 2.14*).
5. Commend the Iona Community for its development work with young people, in particular the focus on environmental issues, and look forward with interest to the creative use of the MacLeod Centre on Iona (*Sections 3.1/5.6*).
6. Are grateful for the work of the Iona Community in its renewal of worship, and thank it for the wealth of worship and contemplative material it has made available to the whole Church (*Section 4.1-4.3*).

**Report**

*May the God of peace inspire us,  
may the God of justice empower us,  
may the God of hope encourage us  
to live the Good News. Amen.*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The context in which this report is written is one of economic despair for many, including the thousands of striking workers seeking a more just economic order; climate catastrophe as the planet heats up beside the insatiable desire amongst many to continue consuming beyond our means; escalation of war in central Europe, Israel/Palestine and other parts of the world; and a commensurate shrinking in Scotland and elsewhere of Church membership. It is within this context that the Board of the Iona Community commends the work of Christians and people of goodwill everywhere to the work towards justice, peace and wholeness rooted in the calling of Christ to love and justice for all.

**2. UNITY AND RECONCILIATION**

**2.1** The Iona Community's Common Concern Networks (CCNs) work together, recognising that actions for environmental justice, for example, cannot be divorced from actions for a world free of war. Members meet regularly focussing on Environment, Poverty & Inequality, Tackling Racism, Interfaith Relations, Faith & Spirituality, Refugees & Migration, LGBTQ+, Peace, and Israel/Palestine.

**2.2** The Migration and Refugees CCN actively spoke out in March this year against the hostile 'Illegal Migration Bill', focussing on the common humanity we all share, and the Gospel imperative to welcome the stranger.

**2.3** With a growing global membership, the Iona Community continues to work in close partnership with the Wellspring Community in Australia and Iona Community North America to ensure that community at a local level remains the focus.

**2.4** Aware of the colonial past and the ongoing detrimental impact on indigenous communities across the globe of climate change, poverty and inequality, the Iona Community continues to seek forgiveness for the wrongs of the past, and dedicates the movement to working for deeper understanding about how all can live well together.

**2.5** Members of the Iona Community say that the combination of a commitment to the Gospel of Christ, along with calling for actions for an end to poverty, to divestment from fossil fuels, to the de-escalation of all forms of war that cause untold misery on millions of migrants is what binds them together in community.

**2.6** Through its Tackling Racism CCN, the Iona Community is engaged in and committed to concerns around the Historic Legacy of Slavery and current issues of racial and social justice. In this regard, the Board is aware of the work being done by the Faith Impact Forum and encourages the Church at all levels to be informed by the Forum's reports, to be fully engaged with these issues at a local level and to take such action as is proportionate and appropriate.

**2.7** The ecumenical identity of the Iona Community – the sense of belonging together as a global Christian community – unites members like never before, with members of the Iona Community hailing from a range of traditions including Pentecostal, non-conformist, orthodox and mainstream Church.

**2.8** As a Christian community, the Iona Community is called to the wider Oikumene which compels it to work closely with all people of goodwill, including friends in all other world faiths. As this work develops, particularly through the Interfaith CCN, there is an openness to honouring beliefs and practices of friends in all faith traditions, and to being changed by them.

**2.9** This involves a process of letting go of pride and assumptions in order fully to embrace the gifts and wisdom of the other. We call for our churches to do the same, to take every opportunity to reach out to our friends in other denominations and faith traditions affirming: “where we can work together, we will.”

**2.10** Through its Israel/Palestine CCN, for example, the Iona Community continues to have deep concerns regarding the tensions and violence in Israel-Palestine. The current situation faces us with an alarming recent increase in violence, as well as the Israeli government’s latest proposals relating to the Supreme Court, settlement expansion and formal recognition of ‘outposts’.

**2.11** In the light of this, the Iona Community is encouraged by the growing groundswell of Jewish ‘voices of peace’ and signs in media coverage of more sympathy for the Palestinian cause.

**2.12** Our Christian sisters and brothers from Israel-Palestine call to us in increasing desperation. The culture, history, lives, futures, children and homes of Palestinians are still being destroyed, now with increasing physical and legal ferocity. In addition, Jews have also been victims of terror and violence, remembering the murder of seven people at a synagogue in Jerusalem on Holocaust Memorial Day.

**2.13** The Board is inspired by the continued informed engagement of the Iona Community with Israel-Palestine issues and expects the wider Church community and political institutions to remain equally informed, vigilant and committed to justice and peace in this area of conflict and unrest.

**2.14** As wars escalate in Ukraine and elsewhere, the Iona Community’s Peace and Reconciliation CCN supports Members in working for the eradication of all weapons of war. We deplore the use of language such as ‘tactical’ nuclear weapons which continues to dehumanise the thousands of victims of war, including the millions of displaced people forced into exile and migration.

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### **3. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND CLIMATE CATASTROPHE**

**3.1** 2023 will be a year of experimenting as the Iona Community develops its vision for the retrofitted MacLeod Centre on Iona. With a focus on youth engagement, on the environment and on offering flexible stays for groups of pilgrims to Iona, the aim is to reimagine that space as a sign of commitment to the radical survival of our planet. Members of the Environment CCN continue to bring their expertise to this work.

**3.2** Five of the authors of [‘Young, Woke and Christian: words from a missing generation’](#) spent a week with Members of the Iona Community on Iona exploring themes of racism, sexual identity and political engagement from the perspective of those under thirty.

**3.3** Membership of the Young Adults Group (18-30) has doubled in the last 12 months. Young members and volunteers say that the combination of a down-to-earth faith and worship style, along with focussed engagement in the politics of justice and peace is what attracts them to life in Community.

**3.4** A team of four staff from the Camas youth centre spent the winter months in two flats – “Mac Houses” – in the Maryhill area of Glasgow. Their task was three-fold: to live together in intentional community; to work alongside young people in the local church communities; and to offer follow-up support to groups who had visited the islands centres on Mull and Iona in the previous years. They worked closely with the priority area parishes in Maryhill and Ruchill, supporting local church groups.

**3.5** While this team will return to the Camas Centre on Mull for the 2023 season, work is underway with partner churches in Glasgow to maintain a presence in the Mac Houses into the future, offering space for young people to live together in community. Thus the Iona Community maintains, through this and other work, a longstanding commitment to the eradication of poverty, through the Poverty and Inequality CCN.

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### **4. RENEWAL OF WORSHIP**

**4.1** Finding a language and a pattern of worship that reflects a desire for God and for justice remains a key objective of the Iona Community. The ethos and practice of the Community affirms that “we seek to be radically contextual, inclusive, and participatory in our worship” which “is rooted in our relationships with God, each other, and the world around us.”

**4.2** Members affirm this desire through their annual recommitment process. Staff lead worship at the centres offering space, language and song in a tone that unites, inspires and compels all to contemplation and action. Guests join in worship renewal weeks at Iona Abbey, and engagement with Iona Community worship material and the Wild Goose Resource Group at events such as ColumbaFest, Greenbelt and Glastonbury Festivals, affirming the desire to find “new ways to touch the lives of all.” Members and Associate Members join together in the Faith and Spirituality CCN to explore themes of unity, a shared theology of justice and of care for creation.

**4.3** As part of our commitment to the renewal of worship the Iona Community is refreshing the vision and priorities for work in this area, building on the remarkable body of work, in word, workshop, teaching and in song, generated over the past decades by skilled staff and volunteers.

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### **5. RENEWAL OF FAITH THROUGH ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION**

**5.1** At the islands Centres on Iona and Mull staff teams are supported to live well in community and to welcome, week by week, others to join them. At the Camas centre on Mull guests have included refugees, school groups, youth groups and groups from priority area parishes, enjoying a week of off-grid adventure, learning and reflection.

- 5.2** At Iona Abbey 91 guests were welcomed in 2022 under the Unlocked programme which offers free space and financial support for travel for those adversely affected by poverty or exclusion.
- 5.3** Scotland’s Interfaith leaders celebrated 20 years of Interfaith Scotland at Iona Abbey in 2022. Inspired by this milestone, the Community launched its ninth Common Concern Network, which focuses on Interfaith Relations. After a few years of their absence, in 2022 Students Week and Youth Festival at Iona Abbey were re-launched.
- 5.4** Through committing to the Community’s four-fold rule of life, the 272 Members and 1,700 Associate Members join together on-line for monthly worship. Members continue locally to meet on-site monthly in the 48 family groups, and more widely in the 25 global regions, for reflection, solidarity, and to engage in joint actions for justice and peace.
- 5.5** Since opening membership globally in 2021, there has been an increase in members from around the world, including Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Australia, Germany, Canada, and the United States. The New Members programme for those seeking full membership currently has 24 members, engaging in a 2-year discernment programme.
- 5.6** Wild Goose Publications ([www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com)) and the magazine Coracle/eCoracle, continue to publish fresh and compelling liturgical and reflective material available online or through the Iona Community shop on Iona.
- 5.7** The renovation of the buildings on Iona will continue with the MacLeod Centre being retrofitted as a youth centre focussed on environmental justice. In addition, internal systems and structures also continue to be ‘retrofitted’, ensuring they are lean and fit for purpose.

*Go in the power of the Spirit.  
Go, and do not try to separate politics and prayer.  
Go, not to escape, but to engage with God’s world.  
Go, to live hopefully, as people of the Resurrection.  
Amen*

*In the name of the Committee*

TOM GORDON, *Convener*  
RUTH HARVEY, *Leader*  
TORSTEN HAAK, *Executive Director*