

## IONA COMMUNITY BOARD MAY 2021

### Proposed Deliverance

#### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Welcome the appointments of Ruth Harvey as Leader and Sarah Metcalfe as Executive Director and wish them well at this important stage in the life of the Iona Community. (Section 2.3)
3. Note with gratitude the completion of the renovation of the living quarters of Iona Abbey as a place of welcome, worship and the renewal of the common life for the whole Church. (Sections 2.5 and 4.4)
4. Rejoice with the Iona Community in the coming into force of the United Nations Nuclear Ban Treaty and affirm the call for the UK Government to join in signing it. (Section 5.2)
5. Affirm the work of the Community in supporting action towards Climate Justice. (Section 5.3)
6. Commend the Unlocked programme to Presbyteries, congregations and wider ecumenical partners. (Section 5.5)

### Report

#### 1. REFRAMING THE FAMILIAR: OUR RULE AND OUR MOVEMENT

**1.1** The Iona Community Board was unable to present its report to the General Assembly of 2020. What follows in this 2021 report does not, however, simply add to what we had intended to present to the Assembly last year but seeks to reflect the Iona Community in a radically different place determined by changed circumstances and times.

**1.2** The Covid-19 pandemic has, in the midst of so much pain, offered us the opportunity to reframe all that is familiar to us in the Iona Community. Our four-fold **Rule of Life**, committing us to daily prayer and reflection; to action for justice and peace; to accounting for our use of time, money and the earth's resources, and to working together for our renewal and that of the worship of the Church, continues to be the pivot around which we meet – in person and online. We have come to realise that we can indeed be community while so radically scattered. We can indeed sense God's presence guiding and inspiring us as we meet online for worship. We can indeed notice what is essential, what is true, what is good as we continue to live this 'very common life' together, gathered around our Rule.

**1.3** In a service of blessing in June we welcomed 7 New Members to full **Membership of the Iona Community**. We are now a community of 253 full Members, 1,851 Associate Members and 2,738 Friends and Supporters. We are delighted that in 2020, 11 young adults made a commitment to the Rule of Life by joining our Young Adults Group.

**1.4** With the whole Church we grieve the sudden loss in 2020 of our dearly beloved past Leader, Peter Macdonald. His presence, his humour, his passion and his gift in communicating the deep message of the justice and peace of Christ is sorely missed. We also grieve with the friends and family of Graham Maule, a prophetic voice in the life of this country and in the work of worship renewal with his colleagues in the Wild Goose Resource Group.

#### 2. REFRAMING THE FAMILIAR: OUR STRUCTURES

**2.1** Now in our ninth decade, the Iona Community is engaged in a process of refreshing and renewing our infrastructure and our spaces in order more fully to live out our calling, alone and in community, to respond to the call of God. It is our privilege and our pleasure to remain focussed on and committed to the work for the justice and peace of God's Kingdom. Members remain committed to our vision: 'inspired by our faith we pursue justice and peace in and through community.'

**2.2** In 2019 the AGM of the Iona Community approved renewed Governance and Movement proposals. As a result, we now have two strategic committees (Community Life and Community Resources), delegating all operations to staff. In addition, a refreshed leadership model was approved, with new Trustees appointed, a Leader focussing on the life of the movement and communications and an Executive Director focussing on strategic and business planning and finance.

**2.3** In this regard, the Board welcomes the appointment to these roles of Ruth Harvey and Sarah Metcalfe respectively, recognising the skills and experience they bring to the Iona Community at this time of reframing.

**2.4** The movement has been refreshed with seven new **Common Concern Networks** (Environment, Faith and Spirituality, Israel/Palestine, LGBTQ+, Migration and Refugees, Poverty and Inequality and Reconciliation, Peace and Disarmament), more robust regional structure and clearer routes for Associate Members to be engaged.

**2.5** With these refreshed structures, and the beautifully renovated living space at Iona Abbey, we are ready to respond to the increased call we recognise in society for spiritual renewal rooted in a life of justice and peace. In this regard, we continue to ensure that all resources at our islands centres, including the worship in Abbey Church, is accessible to the whole Church, particularly in an ecumenical context.

### **3. REFRAMING THE FAMILIAR: RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**3.1** Our renewed Abbey centre and refreshed governance and movement structures now need to be matched by a renovation of our infrastructure. This essential task has been long in the pipeline, and the need for it exposed by the fracturing effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. Equally, measures to address issues such as IT, communications, finding appropriate office accommodation and staff team building have been severely hampered by that same pandemic. Staff and volunteers have experienced periods of working within the furlough scheme, while trying to support as much as possible of the ongoing life of the Community and its membership.

**3.2** With Iona Abbey closed to guests for a third, unexpected year, we entered 2021 with a large deficit. Council has approved a far-reaching, ambitious Deficit Reduction Plan to guide us from our current 'survive' mode, to a renewed time of thriving.

### **4. THE SPACES WE INHABIT**

**4.1** Our annual gathering of Members on Iona was cancelled in 2020 due to the ongoing pandemic. While disappointing for so many, this was also a time for us to re-gather in intentional community through a series of 19 online events during November: Community Month. This experience, of ceilidh and celebration, sharing Member stories, worship and youth events and hearing inspiring input from Rowan Williams and Kim Long, brought together over 100 people at most sessions and allowed our global movement to gather. We truly found, in the words of our daily prayer, 'new ways to touch the lives of all.'

**4.2** The global dimension and reach of the Iona Community, highlighted by our connectedness electronically with a wide variety of people during this past year, continues to be stimulating for us. We reaffirm, at the same time, that this cannot take the place of deep, incarnational, human interaction, for which we long.

**4.3** Our daily worship is now shared online. We meet weekly for Prayers for Healing, and monthly for our Community Worship. These are patterns of prayer and gathering into which we will continue to lean.

**4.4** The living quarters of Iona Abbey, long in need of renewal and renovation, were to be reopened in April 2020. With only a few weeks of the build left to complete the site was locked down in March. A rescheduled formal opening will take place on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021 coinciding with celebrations of the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of St. Columba. This will take place alongside island celebrations on the completion of the new Iona Village Hall.

**4.5** At the end of our **daily prayers** we affirm: 'Gathered and scattered, God is with us.' As an intentionally dispersed community and recognising the blight that the pandemic has been for so many millions of people across the globe, we have, in these last 12 months, discovered afresh 'how good and how lovely it is to live together in community.'

### **5. IONA LEARN**

**5.1** As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, we will, with others of good will, continue to augment our learning and our practice, our reflection and action for justice and peace in the world. Our existing programmes and learning opportunities, including our volunteer programme at our islands centres and our New Members Programme, will be brought under the umbrella of 'Iona Learn.' Working with partners we will ensure that these programmes support the flourishing of the whole people of God.

**5.2** We rejoiced when on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021 the United Nations Nuclear Ban Treaty came into force. We continue to call, with others, for the Westminster parliament to sign this treaty.

**5.3** With our Young Adults Group and their online 'Re-Act' events focussing on food poverty and on the situation of refugees, we continue to press for the end to all forms of poverty across the globe, and the fair and free treatment of all those fleeing oppression or harm. Our **Common Concern Networks** (CCNs) focus our prayers and our actions on a range of issues. In particular, our CCN on Environment is engaged with the work of Scotland's Climate Assembly, and in supporting faith communities to have a voice at COP26, calling for increased and urgent action for climate justice.

**5.4** We will continue to strengthen our partnership with educational and other learning institutions, digging deep into our own story of the initial Iona Abbey re-building programme in the 1940s and 1950s which was seen by many as a 'laboratory of learning.' Our focus will remain on equipping and empowering the people of God to live their faith with passion and contemplative commitment in their communities.

**5.5** When we are able to welcome guests once more to our islands centres (Iona Abbey and the Camas Centre) through our Unlocked programme, we are committed to ensuring that any spaces are offered, through our partners, to those most in need of renewal, time and space for recovery. Through this programme we will provide holiday space and space to live in community for over 100 participants in 2021.

**5.6** Our New Members Programme, a two-year mutual discernment programme focussed on the Rule of Life, is being refreshed in the light of the pandemic, with elements being strengthened through online learning, blending with in-person programmes.

**5.7** Our **Wild Goose Resource Group** continues to enable and equip congregations and clergy in the shaping and creation of new forms of contextual and relevant, participative worship. The limitations of this last year may have curtailed their ability to travel, but not the energy and commitment to the work.

**5.8** Our publishing house, **Wild Goose Publications**, has continued to deepen and broaden access to radical, faith-filled publications in the face of the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, including staff furlough. In this last 12 months 10 books, 10 eBooks and 34 shorter downloads have been published. 'Columba: politician, penitent and pilgrim', by Ian Bradley, was produced in early 2021, a revised edition to mark the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the saint's birth.

### **6. REFRAMING THE FUTURE**

**6.1** Like so many small charities, our situation as we emerge out of the Covid-19 pandemic remains precarious. We are deeply grateful to all our supporters who continue to give generously to ensure our survival. Our gratitude also goes to our partners and to other communities of faith which continue to inspire and guide us. Our renewed infrastructure will provide a clear and open route for all who share our vision to join us:

**[www.iona.org.uk/membership](http://www.iona.org.uk/membership)**

**6.2** In the words of a Young Adult Group member, being part of the Iona Community 'helps me believe in humanity... It helps me live out an active faith focussed on justice.' Our prayer is that this same set of convictions may strengthen each one of us, and the whole Church, as together we follow Christ's call to unity, to justice and to peace.

*In the name of the Committee*

TOM GORDON, *Convener*  
RUTH HARVEY, *Leader*  
SARAH METCALFE, *Executive Director*