

# the iona community

## Iona Resident Staff Notes

### The Iona Community

The Iona Community is an ecumenical community of men and women from different walks of life, and different traditions within the Christian Church, committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to following where that leads, even into the unknown. Together with people of goodwill across the world, we are committed to acting, reflecting and praying for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. In all this, we remain convinced that the inclusive community we seek must be embodied in the community we practice.

The Community was founded in Glasgow in 1938 by George MacLeod, minister, visionary and prophetic witness for peace, in the context of the poverty and despair of the Depression. The founding vision was that, in seeking new approaches to ministry and mission, and breaking down the barriers between prayer and politics, the sacred and the secular, this should be a sign of the rebuilding of the common life of the Church in the world. The task around which the Community first gathered was the restoration of the ruined monastic buildings of the Abbey, the Cathedral Church having already been restored under the Trustees of the Cathedral earlier in that century.

Within a few years, the Community had secured the use of a remote Salmon Fishing Station on Mull. Though Salmon fishing continued for many years, the Community began to use it for work with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, which continues today in the recently refurbished Camas Outdoor Activity Centre. On Iona, years of youth work, during which thousands of young people camped for weeks on the island during the Summer, paved the way for the building of the MacLeod Centre. Completed in 1988, the 'Mac' (as it is affectionately known) is a centre for reconciliation with a special commitment to young people and families, and to providing better access for those with limited mobility. In the year 2000, the Abbey buildings themselves were taken into the care of Historic Scotland, which is now an important partner in our work on Iona.

The Community is made up at present of approximately 300 Members, 1500 Associates (including Youth Associates), and 1000 Friends. The Community originated within the Church of Scotland, which still finances the ecumenical Iona Community Board, through which the Community reports to the churches of Britain. However, its membership has always been open to members of other Christian denominations, and it has always welcomed to its centres on Iona and Mull people of all traditions and faiths, or of none.

Members of the Community live in varied locations throughout the United Kingdom and abroad, and renew their commitment to the Community on a yearly basis. Expressed as much through individual Members as through corporate activity, the Community's current areas of concern include overcoming poverty, inter-religious relations, Christian unity, racism matters, peace-making (with a explicit stance against nuclear weapons), environmental justice, political engagement, sexuality (with a particular affirmation of those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender), work with young people, the ministry of healing, the renewal of worship and the rediscovery of an engaged spirituality for today. These concerns are reflected in the community life that all, both staff and guests, share week by week in the Community's centres on the islands.

The work of the Community is co-ordinated from its offices in Glasgow, where the Leader of the Community is based, together with administrative staff, the Wild Goose Resource Group, Wild Goose Publications and the Youth Work staff. The Iona Community has its own magazine, *Coracle*, its own Shop (with mail-order section) on Iona selling mainly books and crafts, and its own publishing label, *Wild Goose Publications*.

The executive body of the Community is the Council, which is made up of elected Members and certain ex-officio staff members. The Council delegates oversight of the Community's ministry to the following committees: the Iona Committee - responsible for the Community's work on Iona; the Camas Committee - responsible for work at the Camas Centre on Mull; the Publishing Committee; the Resource and Evaluation Committee – responsible for the use of our total resources; and the Programme Committee - responsible for the way that the commitments and activities of the Community are carried out, on Iona and Mull as well as on the mainland.

## The Islands Ministry of the Iona Community

When the Iona Community came to the end of the rebuilding project on Iona in 1966, the Community decided to establish a group of resident staff on Iona. The purpose then, as now, was, and is, to enable the islands centres to be used the year round, as places for the exploration and celebration of the Christian common life, along the lines that the membership had experienced it since the beginning of the Iona Community'.

Much of the Iona Community's work is concerned with bringing together people from different backgrounds and with different perspectives in safe but creatively provocative encounters and situations. Our islands centres, in particular, provide time and space for guests to take the opportunity to step back from their lives, from social and cultural norms, to look at them afresh enabling transformation to take place. Some of our first-time guests may experience discomfort and disorientation, confusion and conflict as they adjust to unfamiliar surroundings and to community living. The task of the Resident Staff is to maintain that safe or liminal space so that it may ultimately become a place of healing and hope, understanding and reconciliation.

The description of Iona, by George MacLeod, founder of the Iona Community, as '*a thin place*' – only a tissue paper separating the material from the spiritual – is fleshed out by the concept of liminal space. It also enhances the Community's theological understanding of its common task particularly of offering radical hospitality. As the writer Tobias Jones noted:

*There are risks involved but that is why hospitality has always been seen, in every culture, as sacred: in order to honour the stranger, you have to put at risk what's most precious, your home and your family...One of the most emancipating aspects of radical hospitality is facing that fear head on and realising that, actually, strangers tend to be magnificent messengers, bringing news you did not expect.*

This is clearly seen in the work of the islands centres which welcome over one hundred guests each week during the season. Guests drawn from all over Britain, all over the world, from different Christian traditions and from none, each given the time, space and place for encounter and engagement, for prayer, recreation and work, who often describe their stay as a life changing experience.

Norman Shanks, another former Leader, explains in *Iona, God's Energy*:

*'it is an experience involving grace and generosity, vulnerability and hospitality, in the course of which minds are challenged and hearts are touched,... where risks may be taken and insights gained both into the nature and purpose of God and into what God is calling us to do and to be. It is an experience...that recognises the spiritual reality that individual fulfilment is to be discovered only in community, that self-development cannot be achieved apart from a concern for one another and for the world around us.'*

The Iona Community recognises that it has a duty of care for all its staff, both on Iona and on the mainland. The responsibility for fulfilling this, in relation to resident, and non-resident, staff on Iona, is devolved from the Council of the Iona Community to its Iona Committee. The remit of the Iona Committee is to be responsible

- for the work undertaken in our centres on Iona
- for recommending to Council the annual income and expenditure budget for the Iona Community's work on the island and the subsequent monitoring and control of the same.
- for recommending to Council the staffing establishment and the terms and conditions of employment for staff working on Iona.

The Iona Committee, in turn, has set up three sub-groups – on staffing, programme and buildings – through which the Committee seeks to work with the Warden's Team, and the whole staff on Iona, to fulfil their role.

The purpose of these notes is two-fold.

It is, firstly, to set the life and work of the resident staff on Iona in the context of the whole work and purpose of the Iona Community.

Secondly, it is to address the specifics of living and working on Iona, both in relation to the particular job role that each staff member is asked to fulfil, and also in relation to the common life which the resident staff share with each other, and with the volunteers and guests, throughout the year.

## The Rule of the Iona Community

Members of the Iona Community are bound together by a five-fold Rule; daily prayer and Bible reading, meeting with and accounting to each other, sharing and accounting for the use of our resources, including money, planning and accounting for the use of our time, and action for justice and peace in society.

The Rule of the Community, though evolved to bind together a dispersed community, nevertheless is a helpful way of looking at the nature of what we, as Resident Staff, are seeking to do and be. Our centres on Iona and Mull strive to be places of hospitality, sanctuary and challenge, which offer the experience of the common life and exposure to the concerns of the Iona Community to those who live in them and those who visit. This common task is undergirded by a common life, and the Iona Community is committed to ensuring that the common life of the Resident Staff is appropriately nurtured and sustained. (Please see further under practicalities of the Resident Staff life) The islands' ministry of the Community is in some ways its Mission Statement, fittingly written, for a Community with an incarnational theology, in people's lives rather than on a piece of paper.

**1. Services:** The first part of the five-fold Rule commits Members to daily prayer and Bible reading. We do not ask Staff Members necessarily to commit themselves to daily prayer and Bible study; what we do commit ourselves to is to put corporate prayer at the centre of our life together.

Each day throughout the year (Monday to Saturday) we have the morning office of the Iona Community, which lasts about twenty minutes. This follows a set liturgy, with changing prayers, readings and songs. In the season the morning service is at 9:00am Monday to Thursday and Saturday, 8:15am on Friday when there is a Leaving Service, and Holy Communion at 10:30am on Sunday. During the winter, morning services are at 9:30am Monday to Saturday.

Evening services happen every night in the season at 9:00pm, and on certain nights in the winter. They have a different theme each night, and normally last for around 20-30 minutes. The usual pattern is:

Saturday	-	Gathering Space
Sunday	-	Quiet Space
Monday	-	World Space
Tuesday	-	Healing Space
Wednesday	-	Creative Space
Thursday	-	Table Space (Communion)
Friday	-	Inner Space

Through much of the season we have afternoon prayers for Justice and Peace at 2pm (Monday to Saturday). These last for approximately 10 minutes, and give day visitors the opportunity to worship with us.

Morning and evening services are part of our common life for which we are accountable to one another. We make a commitment to attending, not just because we feel like it, but because it is part of our life and work together.

These services are the responsibility of the Abbey Warden, but all members of the Resident Staff are expected to share in the leadership of services, as and when able, beginning with the simpler services, and moving on to those which require more experience and preparation.

We seek to ensure our services are grounded in the life of the Iona Community and in the life of the world, that they are honest offerings to God, biblically rooted, inclusive, and creative, challenging and consoling. However, the Iona Community believes that our services are only one part of our worship offering to God which also encompasses our work, our recreation, our relationships to each other and the created order, and our personal growth as human beings. So let us move on to this wider aspect of our common life.

2. **Common Life:** The second part of the Rule commits Members of the dispersed Community to meet together, whereas Resident Staff share a common life which, like the bread of communion, is constantly being made only to be broken open and shared, week by week. The ministry of welcome and hospitality never ends.

We want to make people feel accepted no matter who they are, where they come from, or what they have done. The experience of rejection is a profound and common one in our world. We want to offer a hand of friendship to all, to break down the barriers between young and old, men and women, heterosexual and homosexual, black and white, sick and well, Roman Catholic and Protestant, Christian and non-Christian, 'respectable' and 'disreputable', so that together we may come to see that we are all made in the image of God, that there are no strangers to God, and that we have an essential unity in God's love. So in the MacLeod Centre, the Abbey or the Shop, the ministry of welcome, of courtesy and acceptance is equally essential.

Members of the Resident Staff act as the hosts in our islands centres. In practice, this means being ready to meet and wave off guests on ferries (including early ferries), welcoming groups with tea when they arrive, chatting over coffee after the evening service, assuming the role of host at whatever table you are sitting at during mealtimes, even if not serving, and answering questions from day visitors about toilets, Columba, Macbeth, John Smith and George MacLeod. We are simply to do our best at making guests and volunteers feel at home, especially if they are looking a bit lost.

Loneliness and the breakdown of community is a major source of distress for many people in our society. We believe that Christian faith is essentially corporate - it is about relationship, with one another, with creation, and with God. Therefore we choose a lifestyle which is essentially corporate, and hence, stands in opposition to prevailing patterns of living in the western world, which are essentially individualistic. Meals are eaten in common and no great distinction is ever made between staff and guests. Social and leisure activity is basically corporate also, and apart from bedrooms, all the space in the centres is shared space. While not expecting members of the Resident Staff to eat all meals in common or attend all social events, (we understand that everyone needs *personal space*), it is the core group whose commitment to community living others are invited to share, and potential members of the Resident Staff should be very clear that our way of life is a communal one which makes time for the individual, not an individual one which makes time for the communal.

In relation to meals, for instance, which are normally eaten in common, Resident Staff are required to eat in for two of the three meals each day, - usually lunch and dinner - and may eat all meals out on a day off. If this pattern sounds unduly demanding, Iona is unlikely to be the place for you.

On Friday evenings there are often staff gatherings and socials, which are all part of our common life. Then, during most weeks, there are evening social events involving the guests: the Monday Ceilidh (dance/song etc) in the Village Hall and the Wednesday Concert in the MacLeod Centre. These are covered by a rota of Resident Staff teams..

The presence of children and families is to be celebrated; children bring so much, and not only to the common life itself but to the island as well. They should be accorded the same respect as any other person. In order to prevent them from harming themselves, others or property, there will be occasions when their behaviour needs to be challenged, but just as with adults this should not be done in a way that humiliates. The use of positive language and creative ways forward are helpful. Although a choice of a communal way of life is implicit in joining the resident staff, families are given every encouragement to *be* families. It is to be recognised that parents will make a different contribution to the common life, which will include caring for children, and may mean that they are unable to attend services or help with washing up, for example, to the extent that others do. Furthermore, there is an acceptance that flexible patterns of working are necessary for those caring for children.

All of the above is about our common life, not explicitly about meeting together. However, there are a whole range of different meetings which go on 'under the surface' to sustain this common life.

Following the morning service on Mondays to Thursday and Saturdays, all working Resident Staff gather in the Abbey Library for a brief meeting concerned with the business of that day.

On Fridays, after waving guests off at the jetty, Resident and Volunteer Staff gather for Centre Meetings in the Abbey and MacLeod Centres. Later in the morning there are meetings exclusively for Volunteers and for Resident Staff which provide opportunity to raise matters affecting only themselves, and at lunchtime, together with Staff from Camas, we have the opportunity to share news amongst the total Staff Team. The Warden's Team (comprising the Warden, Deputy Warden, Centre Resources Co-ordinator and Hospitality Team Co-ordinator) meets weekly, and relates to both Resident Staff and to the Iona Committee. Beyond these meetings, there may be work based team meetings and occasional House Meetings in shared accommodation.

That's a lot of meetings! But then it is a large group of people to sustain (almost 50 in the height of season, not including Camas staff). Because of the widespread nature of our work across the various departments and centres, and the many people who have varying responsibilities, all these meetings are part of our striving for good communication and adequate consultation before changes are implemented.

3. **Common Task:** Under the third element of the Rule, planning and accounting for the use of our time, it will be most helpful to turn to more specifically job related aspects of our common task.

The work each of us does is essentially to enable the whole. It is part of our service to God through others. We also invite guests to share in the whole, and part of the task of the Resident Staff is to allow guests and volunteers to make this contribution, to value and enjoy sharing in work, and to feel valued.

The specific area of work for which you are given responsibility will be guided by your Line Manager. The Warden's Team is responsible for the overall management of the two Iona Centres, the Camas Coordinator for the work there. Leading the Iona Resident Staff team, they are accountable to the Iona Community for the entire operation on Iona. Most members of the Resident Staff will supervise the work of Volunteer Staff, and in some cases of guests. You may be given responsibility for the ordering of your department's requirements, for the maintenance of good standards, for liaison with other departments, and for briefing and orientation of Volunteer Staff. You will need to plan and organise the work of your department, and at least once a year submit a report to the Iona Committee. The Committee Meetings in November each year, at the end of a season, are the opportunity for the whole of the islands' centres work to be evaluated and reviewed.

The Iona Community is committed to a responsible use of time. It is important, therefore, to ensure that our time off is being taken, and to be held accountable for these times by our Line Managers. Because our common life is so interwoven it is impossible to apply a fixed model of work and time off that can be neatly applied to every member of the Resident Staff. It is essential therefore, for Line Managers regularly to ensure that enough time off is being taken.

Life in the midst of the season is busy, and both physically and mentally demanding. Having said that, we all need to learn how to pace ourselves, for none of us can sustain continual late nights and frantic activity. Anyone who did that would not last three months. This is a task we do together and what is important is the willingness to share responsibility for the task with others, and to support one another wherever we can.

Whether in the common life or in our job-focussed work, difficulties and conflicts will inevitably arise and call for resolution. Members of the Resident Staff are encouraged to follow two basic principles in the resolution of conflict. Firstly, to communicate directly with the person with whom you are in conflict, ie to speak with the very person with whom you can immediately do something towards resolving the conflict. This is not easy and needs to be done without accusation and in ownership of one's own hurt. Should that fail, you should communicate the problem to the person who is designated as having immediate responsibility for that area, ie., to speak with a person who is able to do something towards resolving the conflict, usually the relevant Line Manager or the Warden, who has ultimate responsibility for all staffing matters. Beyond that, the Iona Community has a clearly set out Grievance Procedure (attached to your Statement of Terms and Conditions and available from Staffing Office) which is to be followed as a means of resolving conflict.

4. **Sharing and Accounting for the Use of Money:** The main way that Resident Staff account for the use of money relates to the budgets we make and seek to keep to, department by department. The aim of the Iona Community is to run its three islands centres at break-even, and to use profit from the Community's Shop on Iona to help fund the wider work of the Iona Community. In recent years, however, it has been necessary to

use some of the Shop's profits to support the islands' work. Budgets have to balance across the whole Community, and we are ultimately accountable, through the Iona Committee, to the Iona Community for the money we spend and generate.

**5. Action for Justice and Peace in Society:** In many ways, the greatest commitment to justice and peace many people make whilst they are on Iona is simply being part of the Resident Staff. The fact that we are paid the same – an allowance worked out on the basis of need, not a salary awarded on the basis of merit or market – is as clear a statement of the Iona Community's economic principles as any.

In terms of our environmental practice we seek to reuse and recycle and compost as much as we can, to limit our use of cars on and off the island, and to limit our energy use. In Shop and Kitchens we seek to purchase, as far as budgets will allow, fairly traded, organic and locally produced goods. In Housekeeping we seek to use cleaning products with the least environmental impact. In our services, in our centres, and explicitly in the North Transept of the Abbey, we promote a variety of campaigns that relate to the justice and peace concerns of the Iona Community. Thus, when we engage with justice and peace issues in Programme Sessions, they resonate with people's experience and connect with our services.

### **A Life Changing Experience**

Life as a member of the Resident Staff on Iona can be busy and often demanding, but we believe that it is also one:

- that opens one up to really appreciate communal joys; enabling one to realise, in the context of simplicity, the value of friendship, laughter, music, and not having to worry about possessions;
- in which seeing people feel really accepted and not excluded, perhaps for the first time, more than compensates for a loss of some personal liberty;
- which proves in most people's experience that obedience to this ministry is faithfulness to something that is utterly worthwhile, and can literally mean life for some people, and is a guarantee of real meaning and value to our lives.

There are few things more joyful than discovering oneself doing things one never thought possible, unless it is the even greater joy of enabling other people to do that - whether it is in domestic work, in services music, art and drama, or just in being able to talk about themselves for the first time. It is a life of finding real colleagues, of continual challenge, and can be, for a time, a Christian life of great opportunity and growth.

### **Practicalities of Life in the Resident Staff**

#### **The Working Week**

The normal working week is five and a half days. The precise shape of your working week is to be determined in consultation with your Line Manager and some jobs may require you to work a split day, with time off in the morning or afternoon.

Although we usually work an average of 7.5hrs each day on the Common Task it must be recognised that in coming here we commit to spending a proportion of our free time in Common Life aspects of community such as services after service teas and communal meals. Also, due to our remoteness, when people are sick or on holiday, when a crisis arises, or when the centres are especially busy, we need to be prepared to be flexible in our tasks and times.

#### **Time Off**

Members of the Resident Staff team receive one and a half days off each week, a half day comprising 4 hours plus the relevant meal and service. It should be noted that the shop needs to work on an alternating pattern of one day one week and two the next. We are also expected to take daily time out from work, services and common life involvement and will be responsible for this to our Line Managers.

Holiday allowances are as indicated in our letters of contract, and vary in proportion to the number of months of work in a year. One week of holiday is equivalent to 5.5 working days, plus one's normal 1.5 days off per week

In addition to holiday time we are entitled to an extra day off every six weeks. These extra days are designed to provide a little extra space in a busy season. They cannot be saved up and should be taken regularly through the year. Extra days cannot be taken alongside a week in which 2 days off are already being taken, nor can they be added together. However, staff may choose to add up to two holiday days and normal days off to an extra day for a longer break.

Holidays and extra days are arranged in consultation with Line Managers, and approved by the Staffing Co-ordinator. This should be done well in advance as there are limits to the numbers of staff who can be away at any time. Normally, it is not possible for Resident Staff to be on holiday at the following times: Staff Training, Holy Week, Community Weeks, Iona Committee Meeting in November, Work Weeks (Maintenance and Domestic staff), and end of season reflections and Christmas House Party.

### **Accommodation and Conditions**

Resident Staff receive full board and lodging. All accommodation is fully, though simply, furnished. Every Resident Staff member has her/his own bedroom with shared access to kitchen and bathroom facilities. Family accommodation is available for a limited number of posts. Applicants who require family accommodation should contact the Staffing Coordinator to discuss their needs. Although the living areas are all fully furnished, it is up to each individual what extra furniture, electrical appliances etc they bring. A phone call to the Staffing Coordinator or another member of Resident Staff will answer any questions you may have in this regard. There is a limited removal allowance available. The Warden's Team is responsible for allocating resident staff accommodation. It is not possible for Resident Staff to bring their pets with them to Iona or Camas.

### **Personal Guests**

Resident Staff have an allowance of 2 free personal guest nights per month, beyond which a nightly charge applies. It is not normally possible to accommodate personal guests during Community Week, Staff Training or Iona Committee Meetings on the island, and, at other times, personal guest visits are determined by available accommodation in staff/guest areas. For further details refer to the Personal Guest Policy (Part of the Resident Group Induction Pack and available from the Staffing Co-ordinator).