

Paisley Abbey Church

Parish Profile

September 2020



Registered Charity Number:SC007633

Website: www.paisleyabbey.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com

Thank you for taking the time to read our profile and showing an interest in our vacancy. We hope our profile will give you a flavour of what Paisley Abbey and its Congregation are and what we seek to do in our church, parish and beyond.

Contact Information:

Interim Moderator: The Very Rev. Dr. Lorna Hood OBE

Email: revlornahood@gmail.com 0141 384 9516 or 07736647767

Applications including a letter, CV & details of 2 referees to Clerk Sue Donn at sue@balgoniedonns.com. Informal enquiries to the Convener johnehkitson@btopenworld.com or the Interim Moderator.

MINISTERS AND DEACONS IN CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS AND SAME SEX MARRIAGES ACT (ACT 1 2015) (AS AMENDED BY ACTS 1, IX AND X 2016)

As permitted by the above Act Paisley Abbey Kirk Session has made a decision to allow the Nominating Committee to consider applications from, amongst others, individuals who are in a civil partnership or in a same sex marriage.

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The Choir in Paisley Abbey

1. PAISLEY ABBEY

Paisley Abbey, surrounded by its old graveyard, sits majestically in the heart of Paisley. It is a parish church of the Church of Scotland and the 'mother church' of Paisley.

The vacancy has arisen with the retirement of the previous minister, Revd. Alan D Birss, who served the congregation for over 32 years.

We have been given permission from the Presbytery of Greenock and Paisley, now Clyde Presbytery, to call a new minister on unrestricted tenure.

We are looking for a Minister

Who will lead us into the future, whilst respecting our history and musical tradition. A Minister who in partnership with us, the local council and community groups, will seek to make the Abbey relevant and vital for Paisley and the wider work of the Church.

The Abbey Minister plays an important and active role in civic events such as Armed Forces Day, Royal Visits, Kirking of the Council, carol services, special bereavement services among others.



2. HISTORY OF PAISLEY ABBEY

The Abbey was founded in 1163 when Walter Fitzalan, the High Steward of Scotland and King David I signed a charter at Fotheringay for the founding of a Cluniac monastery on land he owned in Renfrewshire, approximately seven miles from Glasgow. Thirteen monks came from Much Wenlock in Shropshire to set up the priory on the site of an old Celtic church founded by St. Mirin in the 6th century. In 1245, the priory was raised to the status of an Abbey, answerable only to the Pope in Rome. The Abbey was dedicated to St. Mary, St. James, St. Mirin (the 'local' saint who had first brought Christianity to this part of Scotland in the sixth century) and St. Milburga (the 'local' saint of Wenlock).

The Abbey was also a centre of learning and it is believed that William Wallace, who played a prominent part in the Wars of Independence in the 13th century, was educated by the monks of Paisley Abbey.

Cradle of the Royal House of Stewart

Much of the original building was destroyed by fire in 1307 and restored towards the end of the 14th Century. The Abbey is the birthplace in 1316 of King Robert II of Scotland, the child of Marjory Bruce, daughter of Robert the Bruce, and Walter Stewart, the sixth High Steward. He became the first of the Stewart monarchs and, for that reason the Abbey claims to be the cradle of the House of Stewart. Our present Queen and Royal family are descended from him. The Abbey is the final resting place of six High Stewards of Scotland; Princess Marjory Bruce; the wives of Robert II as well as King Robert III for whose tomb, Queen Victoria provided a canopy in 1888 in memory of her Stewart ancestor.

At the Scottish Reformation in 1560, the monastery was disbanded; the monastic buildings handed over to the Hamilton family and the walled-off nave became the parish church of Paisley.



Various large and impressive restorations have taken place over time until the Abbey looks as it is today.

3. CORE AIMS OF PAISLEY ABBEY

Paisley Abbey has as its core aims:

- To offer worship to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- To welcome in Christ's name all who visit the Abbey for whatever reason.
- To witness to the love of God within the community of Paisley.

4. THE CONGREGATION - WHO ARE WE?

The Abbey has a gathered and diverse congregation of 424 who come from Paisley and the greater Glasgow area.

The average attendance on a Sunday is 150.

The age of the Congregation is mainly in the 45+ category.

The average number of children attending on a Sunday is 13.

In 2019: - 12 Baptisms; 13 Funerals and 1 Wedding took place.

OUR BUILDINGS



We are entrusted with the care and upkeep of the Abbey Church and the adjoining Place of Paisley, both of which are Grade 1 Listed buildings.

The congregation also has ownership and use of the Halls in Lawn Street which is a Grade C listed building.

The Kirk Session is in the process of seeking to replace the current manse with a more modern and more easily maintained manse.

5. WORSHIP

Sunday Services take place at 11.00am and twice a month at 4.00pm. In recent years, the Sacrament of Holy Communion has been celebrated by the whole congregation on two Sundays a month and on the remaining Sundays after the morning service in the St Mirin Chapel.

The hymn book used for congregational singing is “Common Praise” which is supplemented, as required, by hymns printed in the weekly Order of Service.

Members of the Kirk Session, Congregation, Sunday School, Choir and choristers and youth regularly participate in leading worship with Readings and Prayers.

Current Service Arrangements

Under the current pandemic restrictions, two short and socially distanced services for 50 worshippers take place at 10.30am and 12.30pm.



The Sunday School meets in the Place of Paisley and they use the Scripture Union books “Living Stones” and “Rocks” for their worship. The children join the congregation in the later stages of the service

The Abbey Choir

Throughout its long history, Paisley Abbey has had a musical tradition which continues in many forms. The Choir, which takes part in all services including Choral Communion and Choral Evensong, has an enviable reputation for the high standard of performance of choral music ranging from early plainsong to modern, some of which has been written especially for the choir by leading Scottish composers and featured in the most recent of a long line of recordings. The choir has an extensive and valuable library of choral music including many sacred compositions written by Dr George McPhee, the Abbey's internationally known Director of Music since 1963.



The organ



The original organ, built by the famous French organ builder Cavaille-Coll, dates from 1872 and was first enlarged and moved when the Choir was restored in 1928. There have been several upgrades since including a total rebuild in 1968 as well as 2009 - all incorporating the original pipes. The organ today is regarded as one of the world's finest with its unique French reeds radiating brilliance.



6. ENABLING OUR MISSION

The Abbey is enabled in its mission and aims by: -

KIRK SESSION

The Kirk Session consists of 17 Male Elders 26 Female Elders

The Abbey has a Quoad Omnia Constitution.

The Committees with their own remits meet regularly and report to the session.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: The Abbey finances are overseen by the Treasurer and the Finance Committee with a convener at its head. In tandem with these positions, a small team runs the finances in a 'collegiate' system with specific tasks allocated to a number of people. These tasks are salary and pension contributions, Gift Aid, posting and bank reconciliation and banking of cash and invoice payments.

The Abbey income comes from a number of sources, but mainly from congregational giving, the shop, additional fundraising and the rent for use of facilities in the Abbey, the Place of Paisley and the Lawn Street Halls.

Given the age, historical significance and size of the buildings, there is continual pressure on the finances with only a minimum of restoration work able to be implemented without grants from out with the Abbey.

PARISH AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE: This committee's remit is the Parish itself. It is responsible for welcoming and leafleting new housing residents; Christian Aid events; Renfrewshire Foodbank Collections.

It also oversees the Talk it Over Group which is a Post Natal Depression (PND) Support Group for young mothers which meets regularly in the Place of Paisley

At an early planning stage is involvement in a new project in conjunction with Scottish Churches Housing Action (SCHA) for a Drop - In and Befriending Centre for the homeless in Paisley.

PASTORAL COMMITTEE: The Pastoral care of the congregation of Paisley Abbey is shared jointly by the Minister, District Elders and the Pastoral Committee.

Apart from the regular visits to members of the Congregation, the Minister calls on those who need special care and comfort – such as those who are ill, in hospital or bereaved.

Revd Alan Birss held regular services in Care Homes within the Parish boundary.

District Elders keep in touch with and visit every member of their district regularly and particularly at the festivals of Christmas and Lent

When requested, the Pastoral Committee arranges that the housebound are visited by a member of the congregation on a regular basis.

After the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival all housebound members are visited and given a house plant. The Committee organises the provision of after service teas and coffees to allow members and visitors to meet and chat after Morning Services. Soup and Snacks are also served to bring the congregation and visitors together at times such as Harvest and Easter. The Pastoral Committee organises two outings a year for senior members.



PSALMODY COMMITTEE: The remit of the Psalmody Committee includes overseeing the funding of the choir; choristers; choral scholars; organist and assistant organist; music; the upkeep and tuning of the organ and payments to the Performing Rights Society. It also is responsible for overseeing music appointments.

PROPERTY COMMITTEE: The Property Committee oversees the day to day upkeep of the Abbey, Place of Paisley, Lawn Street Halls and manse and also ensures that related health and safety matters are kept under review. The Abbey is recognised as a building of historic national significance and over recent decades a number of restoration projects have been undertaken costing several million pounds. Whilst Historic Scotland, the National Lottery, the Local Authority and various benefactors and charities have contributed greatly to the cost of these works.

Recent projects have included the installation of fire alarm system in the Place of Paisley and it is hoped in the near future to update the sound system in the Abbey.

VISITORS COMMITTEE: This Committee oversees the welcoming of the many visitors from home and abroad who come to the Abbey all year round.

The Abbey, its shop and café are open to visitors every day apart from Sundays when we are open for services only

The Committee is responsible for organising Teams of volunteer Stewards and helpers in the shop and Café from within the congregation and wider community who welcome visitors each day and also at various large events such as Sma' Shot Day, Doors Open Day, Renfrewshire Food Festival etc which take place in and around the Abbey. The Church's location in the town centre makes it a convenient place for civic events ranging from Medieval Fairs, Art Exhibitions, Hallowe'en and Fireworks events, Car Rallies, Musical Events, Formal Dinners and much more.

Visits from School Groups, Nursery Groups, Boys Brigade Sections, Cubs and Scouts Troops (including the Abbey's own group) and general adult tours are



also catered for by guides who have a more detailed knowledge of the history of the Abbey.

Guided tours can also be booked by visitors on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

The Committee is also responsible for organising volunteer staff for the Shop and Café which are open every day except Sunday when they are

open before and after the morning services.

As part of the Abbey's outreach in the community the Renfrewshire Family History Society bring visitors to the Abbey by offering assistance with family research on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

SAFEGUARDING: Paisley Abbey is fully compliant with the Church of Scotland guidelines on Safeguarding. The Co-ordinator and assistant co-ordinator are members of the Kirk Session and report to the Minister, Session Clerk and Kirk Session.

THE SALARIED STAFF

The salaried staff comprise the Church Manager, the Director of Music, the Secretary and two assistant church officers.

VOLUNTEERS

An important part of our mission is the help from the many volunteers who assist in the Church, the Shop and Café and with the regular monthly coffee mornings. Without them our outreach to the wider community could not operate.

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF PAISLEY ABBEY



The Society of Friends of Paisley Abbey (Registered Charity no. SC016574) was founded in 1952 and exists to maintain and enhance the fabric of the Abbey and to support its music. Regular contributions are made to assist the Abbey fabric and music. Evidence of projects undertaken by the Friends can be seen all around the Abbey, but perhaps the most notable are a magnificent stained-glass window commissioned from Glasgow born artist John Clark, and the historical exhibition in the Sacristy.

PAISLEY ABBEY MUSIC SOCIETY exists to support the Abbey's choir and music. The Society organises Saturday Lunchtime recitals as well as the yearly Come and Sing Event. It organises and raises funds for the Choir's Annual Concert and regularly purchases music and pays for a small orchestra on Easter Day. Social

events include an annual dinner and outings to support the choir when they sing elsewhere.

THE FLOWER GUILD: The Flower Guild, decorate the Abbey and St. Mirin Chapel, Sunday by Sunday, with appropriate floral displays which remain in the Church for the entire week. Special services such as weddings, baptisms, royal visits and civic services and the annual Christian festivals of Easter and Christmas extend their remit.

Large Floral Art Festivals have taken place in the Abbey. The most recent was a joint venture by the Flower Guild and the Abbey Stitchers

At Easter the Sunday School children usually help with the Easter Garden.



THE EVENTS COMMITTEE: The Committee's aims are to encourage the congregation to meet socially for fellowship and fun and also to raise much needed income for the Abbey. Successful events have been quizzes, beetle drives, whist drive, car treasure hunt, garden parties, lunches, dinners, medieval fairs, vintage afternoon tea etc.

Committee members have also been closely involved with the Abbey's involvement in civic events such as Hallowe'en and Christmas Lights Switch On.

Some of our events

Fundraising Dinner



Vintage Afternoon Tea



Beetle Drive



Burns Lunch



Serving Food at the Halloween Events



A busy Abbey at Doors Open Day



COMMUNICATION is an important part of our mission.

The Abbey Herald, our monthly newsletter is delivered to every Abbey household and is also available online at our website www.paisleyabbey.org.uk,

The Abbey Facebook page at www.facebook.com, is kept up to date with news and photos.

We also publicise events and services both in the Abbey and as widely as possible locally.

We make contact with and have a good relationship with the local press when it is appropriate.

7. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Abbey continues to work with a wide range of young people within the community as well as the congregation through its Sunday School, Crèche, choristers, school tours and the Abbey Scout Group.

Revd. Alan Birss was Chaplain to Paisley Grammar School where he was a regular visitor and conducted services. The Grammar School pupils attend the Abbey at Christmas and Easter.



PAISLEY ABBEY SCOUT GROUP

2nd Paisley Abbey Scout Group meets in the Lawn Street Halls. It is a large friendly group serving both boys and girls. The aim of the group is to give young people 'everyday adventure'. Each section runs activities throughout the year. Examples of these are kayaking, abseiling, skiing, bushcraft, sailing, hiking, crafts and pioneering. During lockdown the group continued their activities using Zoom.



The Scouts also normally take part in and help with a number of events in the Abbey such as Sma'Shot Day, Doors Open Day, the Wee Sleep Out, a Social Bite initiative highlighting the plight of the homeless in Scotland.



8.THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The Abbey Congregation regularly supports charities such as Christian Aid, Food Bank, Water Aid, Shelter, Samaritan's Purse "Operation Christmas Child", Erskine, Poppy Appeal, World Mission. We also contribute to needy children through our Christmas Gift Service.

We are members of the Cluniac Federation of European sites of which Paisley Abbey is one. The Federation promotes the common heritage of Cluniac sites.

Fair-Trade products are promoted and used in our café and shop and at Abbey events.

The Talk it Over Group and Crèche, for mums who are struggling with PND, anxiety or just needing to chat.

A warm welcome to our premises is extended to a wide variety of users from the community - for meetings, conferences, receptions, graduations; awards ceremonies; concerts; dinners; exhibitions etc – users such as Renfrewshire Council; the University of the West of Scotland; West College Scotland; Trinity Music; Senior Citizens Leisure Centre; A.A; Al Anon; Renfrewshire Tapestry; GSW Railway Club; Paisley Philharmonic Choir; Coats Memorial Choral Society; Paisley Sinfonietta etc. These organisations all generate income and give a wide range of people the opportunity to come into contact with the Abbey.

The Friendly Hour. A group for seniors which is open to all, meet on alternate Thursday afternoons for a chat and a "cuppa" and to listen to a variety of speakers.

Pilgrimages. Abbey members and non-Abbey members have organised and taken part in several pilgrimages. They have walked on one Saturday a month from the Abbey to Whithorn; to St Andrews; to Edinburgh and to Rothesay in the footsteps of the Royal Stewarts The Pilgrims are currently walking to Iona.



The **Abbey Stitchers Group**, who meet in the Place of Paisley, is made up of ladies who are interested in embroidery. Some of them are Abbey members while others are from outside the Abbey.

They are currently involved in stitching a panel for the Renfrewshire Tapestry.



Thank you for taking the time to read the Parish Profile which we hope gives you a taste of the life and worship of Paisley Abbey.

We ask you to prayerfully consider if God is calling you to be our minister. We ask you to pray for us as a congregation in this time of vacancy.