action of churches together in scotland
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Iona Abbey – 1450 Years On –

Taking advantage of the celebrations surrounding the 1450th anniversary of the arrival of St Columba on Iona, nineteen people took up the invitation to join the celebration and to spend a week living together as an ecumenical community at the abbey. The group included 12 Iona Community Members or Associate Members and people came from across the UK, the USA and Kenya.

The main event on the island was on the Sunday 19th, Pentecost Day, when there was a service to commemorate St Columba’s arrival. The celebration involved all the local Christian communities (Parish Church, Bishop’s House, Catholic House of Prayer and the Iona Community), the Children of Iona Primary School and the Mull Gaelic choir. The address was given by Michael Russell (MSP SNP) and the sermon by V Rev Dr Finlay Macdonald, Chairman of the Iona Cathedral Trustees. The church was packed, the singing was beautiful and the reception after was a credit to the local authority and islanders. That morning, the abbey was also the starting point for the ‘Pilgrimage for Peace and Economic Justice Iona to London’. The first group of marchers were blessed on their way from within the cloisters. The marchers will follow the route of the Olympic Torch Relay and arrive in London on 20 June.

In the abbey, the programme included the usual community regime of work and prayer, including the Pilgrimage round the island joined by a few dozen visitors. In addition to the usual village ceilidh, there was an excellent professional production of ‘An Island Between Heaven and Earth’ a play by Alister Rutherford about the founding of the /…
Iona Community.

The group, with a handful of others from the Macleod Centre, began their own programme with a Contextual Bible Study on John 17:16-23. This was led by Rev Murdoch MacKenzie and Br Stephen Smyth. Stephen also facilitated three sessions on the WCC document ‘The Church: Towards a Common Vision’. This is a complex ‘convergence’ document which deals with the theology of church and which will be presented to the WCC Assembly in Busan later in the year.

The sessions allowed participants to familiarise themselves with the breadth of the document and to identify some of the neuralgic issues that face the churches as they seek closer unity. Issues discussed included: the church ‘in and for’ the world; facing secular culture; encountering other faiths; ‘limits to legitimate diversity’; and, unsurprisingly, Communion / Eucharist.

The last full day was led by Rev Mitchell Bunting and looked at ecumenical engagement across Scotland at the local and national levels. Again, the group were able to focus in on some particular issues, including: relations with new churches; barriers, successes and failures in ecumenical engagement; and, the question of episcope / oversight.

All in all, the group worked, prayed, ate, relaxed and studied well together. It was a great pleasure and inspiration to be part of the Columba 1450 celebrations. It is hoped that the seeds of this shared experience will find rich ground wherever they are scattered.

Brother Stephen Smyth, Gen Sec, ACTS

Resources

If you struggle to give Christian answers to common everyday questions then these two resources might be what you need: ‘What Can I Say?’ and ‘God, Jesus and Truth’ are both available from: https://www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/christian-responses-commonly-asked-questions

SCRIPTAID Sketches, drama scripts and stories are available from the Scottish Storytelling Centre for use in congregational worship. The average cost is around £5 and includes a small postage charge. For descriptions of more than 100 items available please visit http://scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk/network/scottish_storytelling_church_faith.asp#resource

Community Reinforcement Approach (CRA) The Salvation Army are to expand their social work with a five year plan to help tackle drug and alcohol misuse, committing £250,000 to the programme. The system (CRA) has witnessed successful outcomes in New Zealand. Drug and alcohol workers will be based in Greenock, Stirling and Falkirk and will practice the method of using community to encourage a change in a person’s drinking habits or drug use through improved behavioural and employment skills.
What’s on and Where?

5 October
10am – 3.45pm North Church, John Street, Penicuik EH26 8AG.

EQUIP – Inspiring and resourcing your congregation. This event looks at practical ideas and useful resources to help congregations be more relevant in reaching out to local communities. There will be morning and afternoon workshops/seminars on the following: More than Gold; Websites made easy; Worship; Messy Church; Anam Cara; Café Church The event is free.

To register (for seating and catering) please go online at: https://www.resourcingmission.org.uk/events/equip-penicuik

Trafficking and the Commonwealth Games 2014

During the morning of September 25th the Anti-Human Trafficking Ecumenical Group will host the third of its annual “Round Table” meetings in St. Silas Episcopal Church, Woodlands, Glasgow. These meetings bring together representatives of organisations and groups which have concerns about a possible increase in human trafficking in connection with the Glasgow Games and offer them the opportunity to share information and to explore ways in which they might work together. Invitations have gone out to those who attended the first two meetings but there is an open invitation to others with similar concerns to attend. If you are interested contact Tom Moyes (01259 222363 or tommoyes@acts-scotland.org)

National Racial Justice Sunday Service 2013

8th September

This year’s national Racial Justice Sunday Service is being held in a venue outside the major cities. Because this is the year which marks the bicentenary of the birth of David Livingstone, the Service is being held in Hamilton United Reformed Church which has links to the congregation of which Livingstone’s parents were founder members. The theme of the Service is to be “Freedom” and the preacher will be Rev. Beatrice Musindi, Moderator of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland’s Racial Justice Network. The Service will begin at 18.30 but from 18.00 a choir consisting of members of Minority Ethnic Christians Together in Scotland (MECTIS) will set the mood with worship songs African style. All are welcome to attend the Service and by doing so to show their belief that this country is one in which racial justice is a priority.

WCC: World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel

22 – 28 September 2013 – Worldwide

During the week following the International Day of Prayer for Peace, church organisations, congregations, and people of faith are encouraged to make a common witness by participating in worship services, educational events, and acts of advocacy in support of a just peace for Israelis and Palestinians.
Scottish Churches Rural Group at the Royal Highland Show (June 20th – 23rd)

In the beginning…….

Today the Stand has evolved and grown to be a famous ‘regular’ with many visitors returning year after year. It now boasts one of the most enviable positions within the showground (below left). In this picture Rev David Atkinson chats to some visitors while they enjoy a coffee. Each year offers the regular slots such as face painting and puppets for the children, but there is always something new. This year the Stand hosted live music and street theatre gospel readings. The picture (below right) shows the crowd gathered for the puppet show. Church Leaders from most of the major denominations of Scotland attended again this year on the opening Thursday and participated in an engaging agenda. (photos from ACTS)