

# ST COLUMBA'S SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH, AUBERY CRESCENT, LARGS



## CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE 2025

### CONTENTS

1. Welcome letter from the Right Reverend Nicholas Bundock
2. Introduction and Description of Parish and Congregation
3. Worship
4. Congregational activities and our mission.
5. The Vestry
6. Communicating Information and our location
7. Diocese and Joint church cooperation and support
8. Buildings – the Church and the Rectory
9. Finance
10. Seeking a new Rector



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Dear Friend,

Thank you for taking the time to explore this post – and for considering whether God might be calling you to share in the life of St Columba's, Largs. This is a full-time post funded directly by the Vestry.

We're entering a new and hopeful season in the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway. There is a growing sense of energy and possibility as we rediscover what it means to be the Church in this time and place. At the heart of it all is our desire to be a "Church for Everyone" – a Eucharistic community where all are welcomed, where gifts are recognised, and where people grow in faith, service, and joy.

St Columba's is a faithful, friendly and welcoming congregation in a thriving seaside town. They have travelled through recent change with grace and resilience, and are now looking to the future with openness and hope – ready to welcome a new Rector who will walk alongside them, deepen their life of worship and prayer, and support their desire to serve the wider community of Largs and beyond.

You'll find here a congregation who value worship, music, and the traditions of Anglican spirituality, who have strong ecumenical relationships, and who are eager to explore new ways of reaching families, young people, and those seeking a spiritual home. They describe themselves as *warm, inclusive and welcoming to all* – qualities that shape their life together and their witness to the wider community.

You won't be on your own. As bishop, I'm committed to building a diocesan culture that is relational, collaborative, and renewing. We're investing in the wellbeing and formation of our clergy, supporting one another through learning groups, retreats, and practical resources. If you join us, you'll be part of a network of encouragement as we seek to become the church we are called to be.

If this post stirs interest in you – if you find yourself wondering whether this might be your next step – please do get in touch. Dean Reuben Preston ([dean@glasgow.anglican.org](mailto:dean@glasgow.anglican.org)) and I would be glad to offer an informal conversation to help you discern your way forward ([bishop@glasgow.anglican.org](mailto:bishop@glasgow.anglican.org)). You'll find further information, including profiles and supporting material, in the application pack.

We are a diocese on the move – growing in faith, deepening in love, and walking together in hope.

**The Rt Rev Dr Nick Bundock · Bishop**  
United Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF PARISH AND CONGREGATION**

St. Columba's Largs is seeking a Rector who is willing to build on the opportunities and take on the challenges of an active church in an attractive seaside town. The surrounding communities offer the potential for growing the church in numbers, spirituality, and community involvement.

Built in 1876 on land gifted by the Brisbane family and with the construction funded by the Earl of Glasgow, St. Columba's is a charming and delicate exercise in the Early English style by Ross & MacBeth of Inverness. There are Victorian stained-glass windows, including a rose window depicting a dove (symbol of the Holy Spirit and St Columba) and memorials to the Brisbane and Boyle (Earls of Glasgow) families and to the scientist Lord Kelvin.

Our church is at a junction with the main road through Largs, located at the north end of the promenade. Our congregation is small and committed with a desire to grow. Our current members are drawn from local areas including Largs and the surrounding villages of Skelmorlie and Wemyss Bay to the north, and Fairlie, Portencross, West Kilbride and Seamill to the south.

We believe the spirituality of our congregation is deeply rooted in fidelity to the quiet spiritual practices of prayer, care, compassion and service – especially among the very young and very old. We see this as important, valuable and counter-cultural work.

We hope the community experience us as a caring church. An expression of our care for the young have been our children's P1/7 summer holiday club. Through this outreach we have shared the Christian message and developed relationships with many young families. As our next Rector will be a key part of this children's work, they should have an interest in the spiritual wellbeing and spiritual formation of the young.

Ecumenically we have a strong commitment to Largs and District Churches Together initiatives which involves shared study groups, joint worship, and running weekly Christian Aid lunches during Lent. This has forged strong connections with members of other churches in Largs. We have a presence on the local Christian Aid fundraising group which demonstrates our wider social concern.

Outreach services like Taizé and Christingle have introduced many to our congregation and worship from the wider community. Our ministry team consists of Rector, a Lay Reader, three Worship Leaders, five Servers and Eucharistic Assistants. Members of the congregation act as readers, intercessors, pastoral carers, welcomers, and flower arrangers.

The congregation identify themselves as a friendly, inclusive and open-hearted community that enjoy the fellowship of each other. They value outreach to children and having opportunities for service.

Most current members come from either an Episcopalian or Anglican background or have a family connection with the church. We recognise that further numerical growth is unlikely to come from this group and a level of change needs to be embraced.

Within our worship, the choir and music were highly valued as was the flow of the services and the quality of the sermon – all of which added to the respondent's spiritual journey. The

communion services, including the quietness of 8am Sunday service and 10am midweek services were appreciated in their different ways, but there were strong and mixed views about the monthly choral Matins. Those who attended, benefitted from our Bible study and Advent and Lent discussion groups.

Some members of our congregation serve others through their work in a variety of health and social care organisations and charities; others serve by working or volunteering in local organisations.

Our building was highly valued by those who responded to our questionnaire, with members highlighting that it gives a safe, spiritual, calm, intimate and peaceful place to worship. A strong connection to outer and inner peace is something we would like to explore and share with those who have struggles.

## **2. WORSHIP**

St Columba's has a total of approx. 80 adult communicant members and three teenagers with average weekly attendance of approx. 35. Attendances increase during Easter, Christmas and at other special services. Most members are over 50, with a few between 20 & 50, and a few teenagers.

### **Our pattern of worship is:**

Sunday 8 am: Holy Communion, 11 am: Sung Eucharist

Sunday@ services of Taizé, Compline, Healing and Wholeness and Lectio Divina.

Wednesday 10am: Holy Communion.

**Special Services include:** Nine lessons and carols, Christingle, Christmas Eve mass, Christmas Day, Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, Easter Vigil, Harvest Thanksgiving, and Patronal Festival. We take turns with other Churches to host World Day of Prayer.

**Holy Week:** A joint ecumenical Walk of Witness through the town takes place on Good Friday, commencing from our Church. We offer our own Maundy Thursday service and have our own Good Friday Vigil, Easter Vigil and First Communion of Easter.

**Liturgy:** The Scottish Episcopal Church 1982 (Revised 2022) liturgy is used at all services.

**Music:** Music plays an important part in the life of St Columba's with a small choir and a Harrison & Harrison organ. This was completely refurbished by the original builder in 1999, has been regularly maintained since but is now in need of an expensive thorough clean. The Musical Director plays the organ or digital piano, directs the choir and, in consultation with the Rector, selects the music. The current music is centred on Choral Eucharist, with suitable anthems. This is augmented at Advent, Christmas, Easter and the Patronal Festival, and by Taizé services and an occasional offering of Choral Evensong throughout the year. St Columba's is an affiliated member church of the Royal School of Church Music.

**Churchmanship:** Churchmanship is traditional along liberal catholic lines with the celebrant facing east as we now have a forward-facing altar. Vestments are worn and the Sacrament is reserved. We use the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

### 3. CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND OUR MISSION

Our Lent, Advent and other bible study activities have been supported by a small group of members keen to share learning and discussion. Friends from other churches have joined us too. We have used films as an aide to talk about how to find our voice, inclusiveness and talents. Those who attend value the opportunity to learn and grow together. We appreciate the opportunity to read and discuss contemporary fiction to see how the themes related to our faith.

Sunday afternoon/evening services have been tried in various formats, attracting a small number from within and outwith the congregation. We feel that these can be developed as those attending have shown that they are appreciated. A large group is attracted to the family Christingle service at 4pm on Christmas Eve.

**Fellowship and social gatherings:** This plays a large part in the life of the Church. We meet for coffee following services, enjoy gatherings such as Harvest, Patronal Festival and Christmas "bring and share" lunches. Social evenings are very popular such as musical events, quiz evenings and Murder Mystery dinners.

**Fundraising Activities:** Our main fundraising events are four car boot sales a year. The car boot sales are also very social with local towns people getting to know us. We also hold Murder Mysteries and Quizzes which are very popular and help boost our income.

**Pastoral Care Group:** There is a small pastoral group in our church, they visit regularly and keep in touch with frail members needing support. This group could be expanded as the average age and level of need within our current congregation increases.

**Mission:** We run a summer holiday club for up to 40 local P1/7 children for a week, which takes a lot of planning, is great fun and enjoyed by all and is excellent outreach.

**Food and Fellowship:** Many members have completed food and hygiene training and provide bacon rolls, soup, tea and coffee etc. at the car boot sales. Coffee, tea and biscuits are provided after the 11am Sunday service as well as catering for other events, such as a "bring and share" at the Patronal, on Easter Sunday and Harvest.

**Largs Labyrinth:** The Largs Labyrinth is a feature of our back lawn. Walking the labyrinth can release patterned behaviour, thoughts, and feelings of various sorts. It can help people unwind. As they release old, patterned energy, the alignment of the body may shift or straighten into a greater spiritual alignment. Walking the labyrinth could be considered as a symbolic "hero's journey," or a journey to a place of peace inside. Some people from our community walk our labyrinth as a kind of moving meditation. We have offered some guidance notes to support walkers. As interest in contemplative practices grows in the cultural consciousness, we could make greater use of this valuable resource. Our church is open daily to visitors during weekdays for private prayer and as a quiet space.

**Charity support:** We have a box for the Food Bank at the back of the church and a member on the committee. There is also a bag for lightly used bras that we collect for a Scottish

charity, Largs people know this is there through the 'Largs People' Facebook page. We fill shoe boxes prior to Christmas, give to the local Women's Aid and have raised awareness of domestic abuse. Local Largs knitters knit hats for Mission to Seafarers and premature babies, and we get them to those in need. We support the Mothers' Union members in their initiatives. We give away a proportion of our fundraising income to two selected charities each year.

**Ecumenical Largs events:** Our relations with other churches and denominations in Largs are excellent. We take our part in Largs and District Churches Together events. We have two committee members and take our turn running a weekly soup lunch during Lent, World Day of Prayer, sharing Care Home services and some opportunity for school Chaplaincy. We have two members on the Largs Christian Aid committee which organises regular fundraising events, such as carol singing in Morrison's. Each year we sing carols in a nursing home, close by, followed by a social event.

In preparing this document, the Vestry consulted the congregation by means of a questionnaire, which yielded the following information:

**Question 1: What brings you to our church?**

|                    |    |
|--------------------|----|
| Fellowship words:  | 17 |
| Worship words      | 13 |
| Spirituality words | 8  |
| Tradition words    | 7  |
| Music              | 3  |

**Question 2: Where would you like to see a new Rector lead us in the next five years?**

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Growth words       | 9 |
| Community words    | 7 |
| Spirituality words | 5 |
| Pastoral words     | 3 |
| Sociable words     | 2 |

**Question 3. What could we offer a new Rector?**

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Support/welcome/friendship/love | 21 |
| Good place to live              | 10 |
| Challenges, new ideas           | 5  |
| "Job satisfaction"              | 3  |

#### **4. THE VESTRY**

We have a hard working and capable vestry which is supported by the congregation. The vestry meets around six times per year on Wednesday evenings and has an "Away Day" shortly after the church's AGM to pray and consider the way ahead. Current members of the Vestry are:

Rector (Chair)

Secretary: Ray Young

Treasurer: Chris Evans

Rector's Warden: Linda Young

People's Warden: Alice MacDonald

Lay Representative: Gib FitzGibbon (Interim Chair)

Alternate Lay Representative: Hilary Moran

Property Convenor: Mark Yeomans

Members: Linda Whitby and Jane McCance

Our Safeguarding Co-ordinator, Victoria Johnston, reports to the Vestry as required.

## 5. COMMUNICATING INFORMATION AND OUR LOCATION

We have a new and active website at [largs-church.co.uk](http://largs-church.co.uk) where you can view back issues of the magazine and service sheets. The print version of the magazine was produced ten times a year but recently changed to quarterly. This is sent by post to those who request it. In addition to the magazine, information is disseminated by announcements at services, on the weekly leaflet, and communication between interest groups. St Columba's Scottish Episcopal Church Facebook page is kept regularly updated as is our You Tube channel. We also have Facebook pages for Largs Car Boot Sale and for the Summer Holiday Club and a WhatsApp church group for chatting and supporting church members, a property group and the Church magazine.

**Demographics:** Largs is a residential seaside town of about 11,000 on the east shore of the Firth of Clyde. Formerly a dormitory town for former local major industries, it is becoming increasingly popular for those looking for a seaside home in a town with a good range of amenities and recreational facilities. Please see accompanying PowerPoint 'A Flavour of Largs' for many photos of Largs life. Although perceived as a relatively affluent area when compared to other parts of North Ayrshire, there are significant areas of hidden deprivation.

**Commuting to Glasgow:** Largs is a short commute to Glasgow - 35 miles by road, an hour by rail (hourly service), and 90 mins by bus. Both airports (Glasgow and Prestwick) are less than an hour away.

**Schools:** Largs Academy Campus (built 2018) incorporates Early Years Learning, Largs Primary and St Mary's Primary as well as the highly regarded Largs Academy.

**Leisure:** Inverclyde National Sports Centre has recently been refurbished and is a great resource for locals. The town also has Largs Marina, sailing, three bowling clubs, two golf courses, the Vikingar! leisure complex with theatre and Largs Thistle Football Club. The Paddle Steamer Waverley is a popular and regular visitor to Largs Pier offering cruises to various ports along the Clyde coast. Largs has many cafes, take away's and restaurants. Kelburn Castle provides walks and outdoor play for families. There are many clubs and activities for all age groups including Opportunities in Retirement (OIR) and Largs PROBUS Club. We have several festivals the biggest is Largs Viking Festival held over a week in early September with Viking villagers moving in and re-enactments of the 1263 last battle on land between the Scots and Norse, with the burning of the longship and a fireworks display. The ferry to the Isle of Cumbrae leaves from the pier at the bottom of the main street with other boats offering summer excursions. Many locals enjoy walking into the hills behind Largs, which gives spectacular views over the islands and the Firth of Clyde. Some prefer walking

the two-mile promenade along the river or participate in the 5k Largs Prom parkrun every Saturday morning.

**Shopping:** Largs has a lively shopping centre with two medium-sized supermarkets, a host of interesting local shops and an outdoor market. A Marks & Spencer Foodhall is currently being built.

**Health:** Largs is well served by a GP practice, dentists, and several pharmacies.

## **6. DIOCESE AND JOINT CHURCH COOPERATION AND SUPPORT**

The Diocese of Glasgow & Galloway extends from Helensburgh, NW of Glasgow, to Gretna Green and Port Patrick. The 61 charges are allocated to 7 geographical regions for consultation and mutual support, and the Diocesan Office and the Bishop's home are in Glasgow. There are 33 stipendiary clergy, 17 + 10 non-stipendiaries, and 43 warrants and 14 lay readers. About half of the charges share a Rector or are looked after as a group by a team ministry. The Ayrshire Region includes 9 charges and 9 ordained clergy.

**Joint Church Co-operation:** Within the diocese of Glasgow and Galloway there are seven Regional Councils which have links and representation to Diocesan Council, Diocesan Synod and Provincial Synod. Ayrshire Regional Council comprising of representatives from the charges in Ayr, Troon, Prestwick, Kilmarnock, Largs, Ardrossan, Dalry and Maybole and meets several times a year. Meetings are open to any interested parties from the charges.

The neighbouring Scottish Episcopal congregations are St John's Greenock (Inverclyde Region), St Andrew's Ardrossan and St Peter's Dalry (part of the North Ayrshire Team ministry). The tiny Cathedral of the Isles, a relic of the Oxford Movement, on Great Cumbrae in the neighbouring diocese of Argyll and The Isles, offers peaceful surroundings for spiritual regeneration and reflection.

**Largs Churches Fraternal:** The ministers from all the churches in Largs; One Church of Scotland, St Mary's Roman Catholic Church, the Church of the Nazarene and the Brisbane Evangelical meet monthly. They support each other and work together to arrange and run ecumenical services and care home services.

## **7. BUILDINGS – THE CHURCH, RECTORY AND HALL**

**Grounds:** The Church, Rectory and Hall stand in a large open site to the north end of the town, just off the end of the promenade, which overlooks Largs Bay. Within the Church's grounds, there are two lawns (one front, one rear), the rear one has our Labyrinth which is reinforced under the grass enabling our car boot sales and other activities. The site has several mature trees, a remembrance garden on the south side and enclosed small grass area behind the hall. These all take a degree of maintenance and upkeep. A flagpole was installed so we could be distinctive from the other St Columba's Church of Scotland church in town, which has now closed, with flags flown to mark significant events such as Remembrance Day, King's birthday, Easter Day, etc.

**Hall and garage:** We have a well-maintained Church Hall, built in 1966 which consists of a main hall, that can be divided by folding doors, a kitchen, ladies and gent's toilet and a

disabled toilet. This is our main social gathering place, where we can seat about 100 people. We have a large walk-in storage cupboard and lots of radiators for the gas heating. To the side of the hall is a garage used for more storage for the church. The hall is currently being repaired following storm damage in January when the roof was blown off and the opportunity has been taken to refurbish the toilets, to rewire and to introduce LED lighting. Many groups use the hall which is a valuable source of income for us. The provision of solar panels is currently being explored.

**The Rectory:** A bungalow was built in 1982, to the rear of the church. The entrance hall has a large cupboard, this then opens into the larger hall, with another large cupboard which gives access to the front facing spacious lounge with large low window, facing the south. The first of the double bedrooms is off the hall with a double built-in wardrobe. The dining room is beyond the lounge and beside the spacious dining kitchen. This is fitted with wall and base units two electric ovens and hob with extractor hood, a dishwasher and space for a free-standing fridge freezer and table and chairs. This then leads to the utility area where the boiler is, plus sink and space for a washing machine and tumbler dryer, the back door is here also giving access to the attractive back private garden with shed. The modern bathroom off the hall, is fitted with a bath and shower, WC and wash hand basin. Down the corridor is the single bedroom with no cupboards, facing the private garden, as is the other double with a double built-in wardrobe. The master suite has two double built-in wardrobes and a modern en-suite shower room with WC and two windows looking south. The back door gives access to what was the garage and is now converted to be used as a meeting room for Vestry or other small church groups. The drive between the garage and house is for private car parking and to the front of the house, this area is maintained by the church along with the lawn in front of the house containing the labyrinth, this lawn is used for many activities. Double glazing throughout and gas fired central heating is in place, with electric heating in the meeting room area. The Rectory was completely upgraded three years ago with new floor coverings, walls insulated and painted, new boiler, modern shower room and bathroom and new appliances in the kitchen. We have good 4G connection.

**St Columba's Church:** St Columba's Church was established in 1876 and we are developing a programme to celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2026. It is a single storey traditional red sandstone construction comprising of nave, chancel, and an entrance porch. It seats 120 people at capacity in chairs/pews. The Church has fine stained-glass windows, some recently restored. It is metres away from the River Clyde.

There is an adjoining vestry room which has recently been refreshed and an internal organ loft. The organ was completely refurbished by the original builder, Harrison and Harrison, in 1999 and is in need of a further deep clean at a cost of £15,000.

The church is well maintained with most pews replaced by chairs, gas heating, new lighting, glass doors and a forward-facing altar introduced in the last two years. The church has wheelchair access, and it also has an excellent sound and loop system.

A quinquennial survey was carried out in 2023 and all urgent works have been completed with steady progress on other works identified.

## 8. FINANCE

**General:** The income from the congregation falls short of paying for the expenses of running the Church but hall donations, fund-raising events and HMRC's Gift Aid Schemes helps to reduce this deficit. The annual shortfall is therefore balanced to break even by transferring funds from our reserves (£204,405 as at 30 June 2025) if need be. The policy of recent Vestries has been to achieve at least a balanced financial outcome, with expenditure matching our income. Where additional expenditure is required on exceptional items such as a major upgrade of our church properties and assets, additional fundraising measures are put in place.

**Investments:** The reserves referred to above are invested in the SEC's Unit Trust Pool, the income yielded constitutes about 5% of total income.

**Stipend:** The terms of the appointment include a full stipend (£34,308 wef January 2025) plus pension contributions - which are fully covered by the Church. There is rent free accommodation in our 4 bedroomed Rectory including Council Tax, telephone and broadband charges. Gas and electricity consumption/payments are the responsibility of the Rector.

**Five Year Summary:** The following table shows how our annual outturn and reserves have fluctuated over the most recent years. Our year runs from 1 September to 31 August in the following year, with our AGM held in October.

Year Surplus/deficit for year:

| Year | Outturn   | Reserves |
|------|-----------|----------|
| 2024 | - £5,440  | £166,877 |
| 2023 | - £30,146 | £188,104 |
| 2022 | - £21,475 | £232,396 |
| 2021 | £8,362    | £297,641 |
| 2020 | - £10     | £244,992 |

**Other income streams and charitable giving:** The church hall is well utilised by the local community and receipts from this quarter account for about 6% of total income. The church regularly fund-raises to support charitable and missionary causes through Car Boot Sales and a variety of social events. At our year-end, we donate a net total of 20%, equally split, between our two nominated charities for the year (one national and the other one local). Unless any legacies donated to the church specifically state the wishes of the deceased, they are simply placed in the reserves for general use.

**Insurance:** The Church, Rectory, Hall and garage are insured with Ecclesiastical and valued respectively at £10,970,000; £573,400 and £3,660,000. The policies are due for renewal on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2026. Insurance claims are currently ongoing for damage to the Hall and garage, Rectory, Church roof and three stained-glass windows following a storm on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

**Diocesan Quota:** The Diocesan quota is based on the church's adjusted income and has averaged 13% over the last 5 years (£8,189 in 2025). The church building, the hall and contents are included in tangible assets and reflected in the balance sheet at a nominal value. A full set of the most recent published financial statements can be provided.

**Corporate Governance:** As Trustees of the registered charity St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Largs (SC004796) our elected Vestry Members have a joint responsibility to manage the financial affairs under the Treasurer's guidance. Part of the Vestry's responsibility is to promote Stewardship and Fundraising both for internal and external purposes, thereby enabling the Mission of St. Columba's to be delivered. We updated our Constitution in 2025.

**Stewardship:** Stewardship is an ethic that embodies the responsible planning and management of resources – as stewards, we try to leave the church in better shape in God's service for the next Vestry team than it was handed over to us by our predecessors. This means not only focusing on paying our own way based on current running costs, but also by challenging our values and direction, and enabling us to finance future development for Mission. In 2024, we ran a campaign asking members to increase their regular giving to the church, with mixed results.

## **9. SEEKING A NEW RECTOR**

As highlighted in the accompanying Rector's profile, we are seeking a Rector who is warm, inclusive and welcoming, will help us build on our achievements, guide us as we develop our vision for the future and lead us unitedly and spiritually through the next steps of our journey.

Our 5 year vision is for St Columba's to become a landmark, renowned for the appeal of its services, its vital role to the life and well-being of Largs and for the love and care shown by its congregation to each another and to the community. It is valued for its thoughtful and open-minded spirituality, shared through ecumenical services, discussion groups, and community involvement.

To help us do this they should have a strong faith and sense of discernment, a deep love of God and others, a passion for recognising and drawing out people's strengths and spiritual gifts and skills in managing change and promoting growth. We have some ideas about how to achieve this. Maybe we could offer more family friendly outreach activities? Maybe we could develop our school links? Maybe we could explore meaningful ways to offer spiritual and emotional support to those who are struggling? Maybe we could do more with our Labyrinth?

We recognise that growth means change, and change is not always comfortable. So, because we also care about the needs of those who have long worshiped at St Columba's, we hope to attract a Rector with the capacity to honour and sensitively care for those who may not initially welcome change. We feel this will need the attention of a deeply spiritual, discerning and skilled individual. If this sounds like an opportunity you feel called to embrace, we welcome your application and look forward to meeting you.

We thank you for taking time to read this profile and prayerfully considering if this is the right charge for you.