

Scottish Episcopal Church St Columba's, Largs

Rector Profile

to be read in conjunction with our Congregational Profile

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

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.

Largs is a busy seaside town of about 11,000: families; retired people; people working from home; and many commuting within Ayrshire, and to Glasgow, for work. It is a popular destination for day-trippers, holidaymakers and those in transit to the islands. There is also hidden deprivation and poverty, alleviated to some extent by a Food Bank and church initiatives, but not much evidence of homelessness. The care homes are visited by a rota of clergy in Largs & District Churches Together, with St Columba's running regular services at the only charity care home. The town has modern schools, plenty of recreational activities for families, and Opportunities in Retirement provides resources for "late learners". There are bus, train and ferry links to the islands, Glasgow, and the Clyde Coast.

Of the other seven churches in Largs, three are thriving, and two have been closed so Christianity is alive and well, but there are also unmet needs. There is interest in Taize services which attract potential members, and a clear desire for contemplative and healing services. A small number of our congregation value and participate in discussion groups, and the right person will develop these "extra-curricular" study groups, which have in the past involved other churches. Ecumenical activities include Christian Aid Lent lunches, and joint services, including our popular Candlemass evensong.

Our church building, due to celebrate its 150th Patronal next year, has recently been upgraded with effective heating, new lights and doors, comfortable seating, audio-visual enhancements with the potential for live-screening, and choice of eucharistic orientation. Music is important to our congregation, with a good organ and a small but enthusiastic musical team who welcome challenges, especially in Anglican music. The Director of Music and choir look forward to collaborating with the new Rector on further developing our sacred music with both choir and congregation, and the wider community. We sing a varied repertoire with a nod to past tradition and also some more contemporary forms. The congregation includes people of the Anglican tradition from all 4 nations, living up to 8 miles away, and, increasingly, former members of local Church of Scotland churches which have closed, who are overcoming their distrust of the "English Church" and Episcopal governance. We have the advantage of ample parking, grounds and a hall, but the disadvantage of being a kilometre from the town centre, albeit a very pleasant walk along the promenade (in good weather!)

We have a modern attractive hall in the grounds (it is currently undergoing storm damage repairs), which offers space for community groups, young people activities, and the opportunity for outreach. In the past we have had Messy Church, Toddlers, and a craft group for primary children. We would

like to find some similar means of reaching young families, and hope that the ballet school, our biggest user, and others will return when the hall is back in use. Our members use it for fund-raisers, socials and fellowship events, and an annual summer children's holiday club. We also have space for car-boot sales which are valued by the community, and bring in income.

Our finances are healthy, and we can offer generous support to our Rector. While our congregational income is insufficient for meeting our running costs, thereby depleting our reserves, they are currently healthy at about £200,000, having been augmented by a recent bequest. We run occasional stewardship campaigns.

Our rectory is a modern bungalow, suitable as a family home, recently refurbished, and ready for redecoration to the taste of the incumbent. The Rector is supported by a competent Vestry, pastoral, property maintenance, and worship teams, and a warm congregation, who are open, inclusive and welcoming to all. Professionally s/he has access to neighbouring diocesan clergy, other clergy in Largs, and the diocesan office in Glasgow.

We would like our Rector to have the following skills and experience:

- A confident relationship with God, good working knowledge of the Bible, and how that relates to our contemporary life, with the ability to translate this relationship, knowledge and insight into inspiring, concise and relevant sermons and talks, and contextual exploration.
- Consciousness of the Anglican importance of Reason and Ecclesiastical Authority in interpreting the Bible, which distinguishes us from other denominations, and offers something different to "seekers" and "explorers".
- An acceptance of and willingness to listen to and debate different points of view, differing spirituality, and non-orthodox understanding, with confidence in his/her own faith.
- A track record in involving and motivating others, especially younger people, in ways that will help us grow our congregation both numerically and spiritually.
- Experience and skills with people and families of all ages

We would like our Rector to:

- Be sensitive to the traditions that have been important and brought a sense of belonging to many in our congregation, such as the now discontinued choral matins, while making more modern forms of worship more meaningful to everyone
- Be aware of the confusion of newcomers and holidaymakers about the blurred distinction between "Church of Scotland" and "Church of England", and the problem of the sobriquet "the English Church"
- Be comfortable delegating and working with a team, and able to appreciate and make use of the skills, experience and dedication of the other members.
- Enjoy and appreciate 'spiritual' and traditional Anglican music, understand how important this aspect of worship is to the congregation, and work with us to develop the musical content of our worship.
- Build up our pastoral care team, and lead them in bringing sustenance and hope to the elderly, sick, bereaved, marginalised, and lonely.
- Enjoy creative problem solving and interpersonal mediation.
- Have a good sense of humour, including that to be found in the Bible!