

# **Iona Community Associates Advisory Group Reports Jan 2018**



## **Highlands and Western Isles**

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I am sorry for being late in writing but this has been a quiet year for us in the north . We had spoken positively of a major fundraising walk/cycle/ sail to Iona for the Abbey Appeal but it failed to happen due in part to the uncertainty of the whole appeal project.

I have indicated that I wish to step back from my rep role and am awaiting a successor. I shall carry on in the meantime and from discussions with Duncan Finlayson and reading of the Appeal progress , we plan to offer a meeting and revisit how we as associates and friends can respond to the appeal and go forward as a group.

I appreciate that our folk have many competing interests and that their unavailability to attend offered meetings is not indicative of a decline in interest in Iona matters. So I remain positive for the future especially now as we can see the progress of the appeal.

*Iain Todd*

## **Tayside and Perth**

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Our group did not meet as such during 2017. Some of us did, however, join with the local Family Groups for their Regional Plenary on 23 April 2017 in Dunblane, which was a good - and informative - day. Until my computer suffered its fatal fault, towards the end of the year, I passed on to the various Associate Members either by email, or post, information emanating from the Glasgow HQ or which I was requested to forward, including the survey amongst Associate Members regarding the possibility of some form of introductory training when a person becomes an Associate Member.

*Judy McDowall*

## **Central Scotland**

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The Central Scotland Family Group, a combination of Full and Associate members. has met on nine occasions in 2017.

Our pattern is to meet in members' homes, the host providing soup and others bringing something sweet or 'accessories' for the soup. Sharing around the table is an important part of the evening and we have shared in each others' joys and sorrows across the year.

When we retire to the seated area and the more formal part of the evening, we first share any Community news. This can continue for some time.

We then move to what has been an innovation this year: one member of the group takes 15-20 minutes to take us through a summary of their personal story. People have structured this in different ways, some using a few key objects, another key moves in their life, another key influences. We have come to value this immensely, always learning more about the life story of someone we had thought we knew well already. I believe this has deepened our friendships and commitment to support one another.

Where time allows, we then discuss a topic under the leadership of a member of the group. Topics we have covered this year have included the visitors' centres at Cornton Vale and Glenochil Prisons, a conference report of 'Conflict, a Part of Life', a report from the Iona Continentals' Meeting in Salzburg, a report by a trip representative to Myanmar, a discussion of Scotland's policy of 'Getting it Right for Every Child'. Some meetings have been planning meetings, one a meal in Gargunnock Pub the week of Ian Fraser's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday (when word went round the village and many from the community 'popped in' to honour Ian). This year both Members and Associates took part in the meeting that focused on financial accounting.

We have played our part in the Regional Plenary in April and were delighted to attend Ian's birthday lunch in Alva in November. With other celebrations this year, we did not have a summer picnic, but focused instead on hosting two successful concerts in August to raise funds for the Capital Appeal.

Already we are looking forward to 2018 with very healthy numbers (despite cold weather) at our recent January meeting.

*Jenni Barr*

## **Argyll Family Group**

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| <b>Where and when does the Family Group meet?</b>   |
| Monthly, in the homes of group members across Argyll  |
| <b>What does Family Group do?</b>   |
| Meet during the week 11.00 – 3.00ish. Two members of the group are in paid employment and we try to ensure they can attend meetings. Share news, Say Office, conduct business, finance etc, Ensure we have time to cover our topic, listen to a guest speaker etc, Lord's supper. Sharing lunch provided by our host. |
| Group has a convener but most tasks are shared on a Rota with everyone taking a turn of   |

producing notes of the meeting, leading the office, leading the Lord's supper, acting as convener for the meeting. We share responsibility for finding speakers / leading the part of the meeting about a topic

**What is the format of the Family Group?**

Small number of full members, 12 associate members who participate fully in the life of the Group. A small number of email friends to whom we send our notes.

A willing (?) volunteer is treasurer

**Highlights of the year:**

Regional plenary, held on Mull.

Sharing meals with each other

**Topics discussed:**

- Slavery – we appreciated Iain coming to talk to us
- Travelers tales, some of our number have travelled widely this year.
- Refugees
- The meaning of the Lord's Supper
- Trade justice
- Sharing our favourite music, and saying why it moves us
- Christmas Story, truth, metaphor or myth
- Eco congregation

**Other matters i.e. dispersal of Family Group Funds etc:**

Pleased to welcome Rosemary Power to the group during the year

Sad that a longstanding member, Lawrence Nugent, died in September.

**Finance**, during the year we have sent money to the following:

- Iona Capital Appeal
- Mid Argyll Malawi twinning group
- Positive action on housing for refugees
- Support for Lucy, a Ugandan, to help her studies
- Safe passage UK
- World land rust elephant corridor appeal
- Haiti disaster appeal
- Fratello
- Refugees in Greece
- Centre for peace and reconciliation in Bethlehem
- Care for Calais
- Lord Dubbs campaign, Africa
- Christian Aid for the Yemen

*Alan Hawkins*

## **Fife Associates Group**

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As Associates in Fife are now an integral part of the Family Group, this is essentially a Family Group Report, much of it copied and adapted from FG Convenor's mailings! We meet monthly on Sunday afternoons at various members houses. The regular group consists of seven full members and nine Associate Members, including, among others: 2 Isabels, 2 Alans, 2 Morags, & 2 Fionas. There is usually a good attendance, health and holidays permitting.

Sadly, a feature of our group this year has been ill health of some members, added to, in a few cases, by the trials and tribulations of the benefits system. Both Morags each suffered the sudden loss of their respective father in the autumn, and we were saddened earlier in the year by the death of Helen McDonald, whose husband Ian was a member of the Fife Family Group for many years.

Susan Lindsay was hallowed at Community week and enjoyed the experience very much, though none of the other Fife members were able to attend. Morag Wilkinson reported on her visit to the European Iona gathering in Salzburg.

On Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> March, instead of the March Family Group, we made £360 from a coffee morning at Inverkeithing Church Hall and peripheral sales, to support the capital appeal for the Abbey refurbishment (now called "Sanctuary and Light.") At the same event we participated in "Operation Crafty Aid", a scheme for supporting Hadeel/Palcrafts, where we send £100 and they sent us a box of food and crafts for resale.

I know that the Associates Fund will be under discussion at the meeting, so it might be useful to know that an increased number of Associates are giving through the Family Group, accounting for around 40% of the annual total. £1200 was disbursed to various causes, not including the funds from the coffee morning for the capital appeal.

Family groups were asked to suggest the name of an inspiring campaigner for peace/justice/human rights for the purpose of giving names to the refurbished Abbey rooms. A great many people were suggested but we managed to agree on two: Harriet Tubman and Mary Barbour.

The Iona Community Position Statement on Israel/Palestine was discussed.

*Isabel Care Smart*

## **Edinburgh Iona Associates and Friends**

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We organised seven meetings to take place during this year, having planned the programme together at the St Columba's day meetings the previous year and this year, then sent it out to over a hundred Associates and Friends in Edinburgh and Lothians by email (or post if they

don't have email). Most meetings took place in our own homes and included saying the Office together and also enjoyed sharing food sometimes.

We chose the following themes: When we don't know what to say- supporting those who are terminally ill, led by Jenny W. in a very participatory way which got us all involved, interacting and moving and brought out a wide diversity of responses; Walk and picnic around Sandy's Mill, with a discussion on Africa, was very good led by Pat and Peter; St Columba's Day celebration at Emmaus House, led by Gillian; a Hope and Future for Children in Africa, led by Isobel; An Iona Big Sing fundraising event, led by Member Mike Holroyd, for the Capital Appeal took place at Augustine United Church (which generously let us use the Sanctuary); A Love Song for Europe, whither the U.K. Without Europe, a PowerPoint with images, music, poetry led by Alastair; An Advent Celebration with prayer, songs, poems, led by Julia.

Apart from the Big Sing which attracted about 40 participants and raised over £300 we were usually 6-10 participants at the meetings, including an Associate who had recently moved to East Lothian, as well as the 'usual suspects'.

We feel that our meetings are an important element of our mutual support for each other as pilgrims through the difficulties we all and the world face today. All the meetings have been friendly, sociable and interesting. It was especially good to have a joint picnic in May with the North West Edinburgh Family group at Sandy's Mill near Haddington also joined by an Associate from Sweden! Don asked if anyone could host a young man coming from Nigeria to research a PhD at New College who had been refused a visa unless he had an address in this country. Niall and Jenny offered so Emmanuel has been staying since 1st September, and is working hard on the topic of ways of achieving peace between Muslim and Christian communities. When he returns, he will be teaching for 3 years at the University of Nigeria and we hope from that may come a real improvement in Nigerian interfaith relationships. He has come to several Associates' meetings, including the September one which focussed again on Africa and the welfare of children and valuable work in Kenya and Uganda.

Individually, we are involved in supporting peace and justice charities such as Medical Aid for Palestine, Sending a Cow to Africa, food banks, and in non violent direct actions against nuclear weapons.

We are very much looking forward to meeting more Members and Associates at the East of Scotland Plenary meeting in March and to being involved with more than the 6-10 regular attenders at our meetings.

*Gillian Lawrence*

## Cumbria and North Lancashire Group

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Over 2017 we had a total of 10 gatherings

- 6 as Associates & Friends
- 2 joint meetings with the Cumbria Family Group
- Our group hosted a North West Columba Day event - open to all
- North West Plenary – open to all

Our Associates & Friends Group consists of about ten regulars with a further half dozen who come from time to time. We meet in the daytime on a Saturday except in the height of summer when we gather on a Friday evening as travel can then be in daylight. The pattern to our meetings is we gather with a chat over coffee, spend a couple of hours engaging with a particular theme, eat a bring-and-share meal together then have a time hearing about what is happening in each other's lives & passing on Iona and other news. We close with worship. Once a year we email all the Associates and Friends in our area sending the programme for the coming year and inviting folk to join us. There are probably over 50 Associates and Friends in our area who could potentially come along.

Over the year we have engaged with topics such as:

- Refugees
- Living in Uncertain Times
- Bringing an object of personal significance to talk to
- How we resource our spiritual journeys
- Unpacking Issues Around Nuclear Deterrents.

*Hugh Kidd & Katherine Froggatt*

## North West England

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The Manchester Group continues to meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday evening of the month, but we have been struggling with numbers at times. This has led us to try to out other ways of getting together.

We have held two very successful 'tea and scones' sessions on a Sunday afternoon. This has enabled two of the families with younger members - who struggle to get to evening meetings – to join in. It's been a wonderful opportunity to get to know each other socially – including reminding ourselves how much fun children (and adults) can have with old boxes of lego and Brio train sets.

We have also found that events with food are more successful at bringing folk out – as one of the other highlights of the year is our annual Friday early evening Epiphany meal – which again allows families to attend.

Friday evening meetings have included a talk from Associate Monica Bolton, who shared her personal experience of ME over many years, which has led her to do a PhD, researching the

ethics and practicalities involved in clinical drug trials at Manchester University; a session to discuss ideas in relation to the induction of new Associate Members and an Advent session led by John Roussel. However, we have struggled to come up with imaginative ideas for sessions, which aren't reliant on simply inviting 'visiting speakers.'

We have participated in the North West regional events, which included in February 'Art, Pilgrimage and Activism' led by Rosemary Power, who enlightened us on the Book of Kells and the origins of the Iona Community, as well as the workings of the Iona Prayer Circle.

In June, we celebrated a wonderful Columba Day in Lancaster, organised by the Cumbria associates group on the theme of 'People Place and Partnership.' This included inspiring stories from folk across the region including Dialstone Methodist Church's series of events on the theme of a Good Society; a story of how a weekly craft session had helped deepen relationships in a local community; and Christine Jones's story of how her local church had been able to raise funds to transform their building into a thriving centre for community activity. We spent the afternoon doing various craft activities, and reflected together on the tragic events in Manchester and Grenfell that had happened in the preceding weeks.

*Rachel Hockey*

## **Northumbria Associates and Friends**

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This large area covers Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, County Durham, Teesside, Cleveland and part of Yorkshire. There are almost 70 Associates and Friends in this region many of whom live in rural areas with poor transport links. I am slowly building relationships with Friends and Associates, some of whom I have never met. I have occasional telephone calls and letters.

I organised my first meeting in 2015 and I asked all 12 attendees to complete a questionnaire. I am unable to meet all their different requests for fewer/more meetings and various different styles of worship and meeting structure. I decided it would not be helpful to have questionnaires in future.

This year I agreed with the I.C. Members that we would arrange three gatherings for worship in Alnwick, Hexham and Durham. This failed to happen because of various problems. We have therefore not met during 2017.

John Bell has agreed to lead a day in The United Reformed Church, Durham on Saturday May 12<sup>th</sup>. I am confident that this will be well attended.

The general feeling in this region is that one meeting a year is enough. I have decided that I will retire from this post after John's visit. I will tell the associates and friends of my intention to step down when I send out the invitations to the May 12<sup>th</sup> event and will ask for volunteers to take over my role.

*Jackie Scrowther*

## **Yorkshire Associates**

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The Yorkshire Associates Group met three times during 2017, first in York in February, then Scarborough in July, and finally in Leeds in November.

The then Iona Community Leader Peter Macdonald was originally to attend the February meeting, but had to pull out at the last minute for health reasons, so we used the meeting to discuss ideas for future, along with a Wee Sing and worship.

In summer we met at Westborough Methodist Church in Scarborough for a largely social gathering. A showery morning cleared to become a lovely sunny afternoon, so we were able to wander down to Westborough's beach hut on the North Beach to spend time together, though it was a bit cold for swimming. One associate left a wonderfully-drawn Iona Community logo in chalk on the promenade in front of the beach hut. Many thanks to Rosie and Roger Coles for hosting us.

The November gathering was, perhaps surprisingly, the first ever gathering in Leeds that anyone can remember; we met in the historic Mill Hill Chapel, just a minute's walk from Leeds railway station. On this occasion, our very own Fiona Kendall gave a presentation about the plight of refugees making the dangerous trek through north Africa and across the Mediterranean to Italy, drawing on her own recent trip to a conference in Italy hosted by Mediterranean Hope, a charity which works with these refugees. This sparked a lively discussion, and led to worship based around the Service for Justice and Peace A in the new Iona Abbey Worship Book, which was wonderfully appropriate for the occasion.

This has been a year of some change in the coordination of the Yorkshire Group. Rosalyn Sutcliffe has now become a Full Member, so David Pattinson and Fiona Kendall took over as joint coordinators—we are very grateful for all the advice Rosalyn has given us. However, Fiona is now being sent to Italy by the Church of Scotland to work with Mediterranean Hope for the foreseeable future—we wish her all the best!

*David Pattinson*

## **West Midlands Associates Group**

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We have continued to meet about 8 times during the year, for sharing socializing, discussion and study. The number of people attending varies between 10 and 20, and our programme runs from a planning meeting in September through to a Columba Day service in June. The social and study events take place in members' homes the services usually in churches.

The 2016-17 programme included, in October a discussion on our experiences of change, in which members of the group shared their own experiences. This proved to be a very moving and challenging time together.

Our December Advent service was held in the Chapel of a convent connected to the school in which one of the group teaches.

In January we had a New Year shared lunch together, and in February we developed our links and friendship with the Ahmadi Muslim community by visiting their Mosque in Halesowen, sharing in their prayers, hearing from the Imam and eating their delicious food.

The Regional Plenary of 2017, organised by the Family Groups and Associates' groups of the West and South Midlands, was on April 1<sup>st</sup> in Coventry with the theme "All are Welcome". At this meeting we had three speakers, one from a local charity working with Asylum Seekers, another was an Ahmadi Muslim whom we had visited in February and the third was Peter Mac Donald who came from Glasgow to share news from the wider Iona Community.

In May Joanna Anderson and Dennis Neville led a pilgrimage round the Wrens Nest National Nature Reserve.

The second plenary was a chance to celebrate Columba Day with a social event and was held in Birmingham with a pilgrimage around the city's canals led by Dennis Neville.

The role of coordinating the Associates group has grown in the last couple of years with the advent of more regional meetings, and Associates getting more involved in organising them. At our planning meeting for this year's programme in September the group agreed to share out tasks. Fiona Barker agreed to take on the role of attending the AAG meeting in York.

*Clare and Dennis Neville*

## **Oxfordshire**

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We have met as an Associates Group only twice this year but have been part of 2 successful regional meetings with the West Midlands, viz. "All are welcome" at Coventry and a "Canal Pilgrimage" in Birmingham, very ably led by Dennis Neville.

*Mary White*

## **Iona Cymru: Iona in Wales & the English Marches**

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This group enjoyed 3 gatherings during 2017.

On March 18<sup>th</sup> the Wales/Marches Family Group hosted 'Sparks of Light' in Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury – an opportunity for people with perhaps little or no knowledge of the Community to 'encounter, learn and experience what the Iona Community is all about'. An encouraging hall-full of participants experienced worship (of course); quick, 2-minute 'sparks' offered by Community Members and Associates ("how we try to live the Community Rule"); Iona music & poetry; stories of other experiences of community, e.g. a local community choir; and news about Iona and plans for the Abbey accommodation.

Every other year Iona Cymru holds a weekend residential, usually at Fran (Associate) and Kevin Blockley's farm near Llanidloes in the very centre of hilly rural Wales. And that's what we did at the very end of June. We were 17 in total. Our theme was 'The Earth and all its People'. The main contributor was Pamela Mason, Usk-based nutritionist who focusses on sustainable food systems, and has recently co-authored a book on Sustainable Diets. (Our

diet over the weekend, supplied by Fran and her live-in volunteers, certainly sustained us very well indeed.) Other sessions, held both in and out of doors in thankfully good weather, were an introduction to Fran & Kevin's farm and a walkabout; a creative time with art, writing and music; worship both in and out of doors; and reflection on 'Mother Earth, Mother God' – literally earthy, muddy, Celtic theology. Huge gratitude to Fran and Kevin for their welcome and hospitality (once again).

And, in the autumn, on October 7<sup>th</sup>, Brian Selby invited us (again) to Community House in Newport S.Wales. 11 of us had a fascinating introduction to Community House's wide range of activities, anything from a slimming club to 'Coffee 'n' Laughs', a friendship group for women of many faiths & ethnicities; from a youth project funded by BBC's Children in Need, to a Muslim group who practice Sufi meditation. Great thanks to Brian and his colleagues for their generous and warm hospitality.

We have just two dates in our diaries for 2018: April 21<sup>st</sup> in Gobowen, Oswestry (no theme fixed yet, though possibly about the Community's commitment to peace-making); and October 6<sup>th</sup> in Abergavenny. We intend that the October gathering should be similar to 'Sparks of Light': a meeting point of the Community with local expressions of community.

And, a footnote which maybe doesn't directly affect Iona Cymru: a new Family Group is forming in the New Year, based in and near Abergavenny, for Members and committed Associates in this part of the south of Wales: currently the Wales/Marches Family Group is rather N Wales-centred. We hope we are in collaboration, not in competition with each other!

*Francis Buxton*

## **East Midlands**

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My apologies for not returning a report from the East Midlands Family Group (Members and Associates). We continue to meet as before about every six weeks on a Sunday afternoon for a shared meal, discussion and worship.

*Judith Gilbert*

## **South Midlands (not Oxfordshire) Hertfordshire Associates Group**

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Our group mainly stem from Hertfordshire Associates but with an increasing number from Bedfordshire. At our three meetings this year we are always conscious of those, through age or illness, who are unable to be with us in body but are there in spirit. In this busy world of ours there are also always members with other commitments.

On the fourth of March eight of us gathered at Bedford University as guests of Cass Howes, who is Chaplain there. We learnt of her Interfaith work with a very multi cultural group of students some of whom find our social freedom often difficult to cope with. We also talked

about the planned work for the Abbey and our first lay leader Michael Martin, of his energy and foresight.

On Saint Columbus Day, the 10th of June we visited Barbara Sedassy's delightfully artistic house and garden in Chorley Wood. The weather was hot and sunny so we were outside at tables, for a bring and share a meal, under sun umbrellas. Barbara, an artist of note, taught us all how to dye and make silk scarves which, after a spell in the microwave and a dry on the clothesline, we were able to take home. Our own individual and unique scarf! There is nothing better than a project to unite a group.

Our last official meeting of the year on October the 26th was at Mary Coleman's home in Abbots Langley. Eight attended and after a wholesome shared meal we discussed the Palestinian conflict with Israel. We learnt about the role and value of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel ( EAPPI,) a Quaker coordinated worldwide organisation which tries to safeguard the rights of Palestinians who are being displaced, facing daily check points and whose homes are being dismantled and land occupied. Mary also volunteers for the local food bank, and we learnt from her about the growing need of so many in poverty without the means to obtain food.

In November a few of our group visited a North London group who meet at Saint Luke's Church, Hillmartin Road, Holloway. We had a fine bring and share meal and like the feeding of the 5000 there were at least 12 baskets leftover! We had a talk by Sarah Roweberry about her experience in Israel and Palestine as an EAPPI volunteer, which was most enlightening and highlighted the injustice of many of the actions of Israel against the Palestinians.

We ended with an Iona Service from the "Wee Book of Prayer". We enjoyed ourselves and were nourished by meeting with another Group, wishing we could do this more often.

*June Meredith and Roger Sewell*

## **East Anglia**

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*No report*

## **London Gathering**

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Well, we said a year ago that 2016 would be a tough act to follow (after the London Regional Plenary held in November with Peter Macdonald leading), but we managed it. The London Gathering continued its approach of meeting three times during 2017 in March, June for St Columba's Day, and November. The meetings were again generously hosted by St Luke's Parish Church, West Holloway, and it is important to say a big thank you to Meg for this, because our meetings would not be the same if they were not at St Luke's - the venue itself is great, the welcome, and the continuity of inclusivity all make a big difference. Without it I am not at all sure what we would do.

Once again we meet on a Saturday afternoon and follow the simple pattern of lunch including hot soup, a themed discussion or presentation, followed by a short Iona Community worship. Arranging the meetings is shared and the sharing this year was again Meg Wroe and Andy Dart, with David maintaining the email register and sending out the communications (sometimes at the last minute). Everyone are welcome to join us and the list includes mainly Associate Members and Friends.

Attendances are not counted and have varied this year - but the average held up at around the 12 mark. Those attending may come from any part of London or very much further - south or north or east or west. This is typical of London - where travel is governed by available (often radial) transport links. A very warm welcome is extended when you arrive, and there is an informal and inclusive atmosphere at all times - a reminder of meeting together on the Island or anywhere else where people from the Iona Community get together.

Our gathering on 4th March was led by Meg Wroe and included an absolutely fascinating session conducted by Associate Member Bob Gilbert, who took us on a tour of the Church yard and neighbouring street to examine and hear stories about the plant and wild life in this part of London (Bob is I believe a botanist) including their biblical connections. Bob leads groups on Iona about the natural environment. The meeting on 24th June which was a smaller gathering than usual concentrated on a local issue - our response to the attack outside the Finsbury Park Mosque, that had happened shortly before we met, and the gathering offered their support to all affected in the local community. For our meeting on 18th November the speaker was Sarah Roweberry who talked about her experience as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Israel and the Palestine territories. Meg had spoken to us previously about her visit to Palestine and this was an important follow up. The meeting was well attended with a number of people joining us from other areas around London.

One last point to note. When we combined with Members at the Regional Plenary Gathering in November 2016, the invitation was given to Associate Members who might be interested in joining and regularly attending the London Family Group. We also repeated our invitation that Members are always welcome to come to our London Gathering. Andy reported on his taking up the offer to attend the Family Group. For some of us who live far away from London, a monthly commitment to attend a Family Group might be difficult even though the spirit is willing.

*Timothy Bamber (with some help from Dad's written records)*

## **South East of England**

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The SE Associates Group has thrived in 2017 after adapting to changes. We have continued to hold two meetings in the year but not to organise a weekend meeting in the Spring but a one day meeting at the same venue. Elaine Bliss has taken over the main role of organising

the events supported by others from the group. We have also up dated the email list from Iona Community records and as a consequence more Associate members have joined us at both the Spring and Autumn Gatherings.

Our Spring Gathering held in the St Cuthman's Retreat Garden Room at Coolham West Sussex on 10th June had the theme: St Columba - Sinner, Saint and Pilgrim and was led by Hilary Fife, Anglican Priest, Chaplain of Croydon University Hospital.

Our Autumn Gathering was held on 21st October at the Haywards Heath Methodist Church and was led by the Reverend Chris Morley. He gave Reflections on the Methodist Modern Art Collection talking about a selection of the pictures shown on slides. As mentioned, both events were well attended and much appreciated by all. We hope to build on the efforts of 2017 and develop the group further in 2018.

*David Bamber*

## **Southern England**

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There is an established group meeting in the Solent area- rather like a house group. They have kindly invited me to join them and about 8 -10 people meet 4 times a year. A smaller subset of this group meets more frequently - 3 family members ( as the new Solent group) and 3 Associates. As Associates we are looking at committing as much as possible to the values of the Family members. I have personally found this a really good way to learn more about the Iona community - particularly as 2 of the family members were only hallowed last year and are still very much exploring what their commitment means. I have personally been inspired by one older lady who is doing so much to support her family, church and wider community including refugees.

*Leslie Ann Richie*

## **South West England**

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This year has been rather quiet - in the South West but we did meet in March of last year in Exeter for an Iona Community Gathering. It gave us the chance to meet up and worship, talk, think, share, catch up, eat and be together. The Theme for the day was "Facing up to Fear: Opening up to Hope." It was a great day when about 50 of us listened and shared ideas. It was wonderful to be together and witness our faith in action.

We also had plans to meet up for St Columba day. Unfortunately the venue had to be changed and we did not have any members interested enough to travel to the event. It was cancelled in the end.

We have heard that the United Methodist church in St Ives had Iona Style Worship in June. and St Mary's Church in Penzance offered two full Days of Hope with a Big Sing and six other different services and events facilitated by Alison Adam in May. Both sounded exciting.

In March of this year we have Another Iona Gathering planned Entitled "Poverty - What can We Do?" It is being held on the 3rd of March at South Street Baptist Church in Exeter. We are hoping for another good turnout.

*Penny Gardner*

## **Germany**

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### **1) German Family Groups**

In Germany we have Associates, Members and also Friends as participants in Family Groups. We have a lot of Associates and not so many full Members. The latter are spread out across the whole country and frequent face-to-face meetings only for them are not practicable, so they mostly have Skype calls.

We have our annual Plenary as a weekend meeting in late October in Haus Salem, a small conference center in Bielefeld. We can welcome visitors from other countries since we can do most things in English if necessary.

#### **South-West Group**

Eight participants, including two new ones in 2017. Still reckoned in this group, though living in Dublin as pastor for German- and English-speaking Lutherans in Ireland, is Stephan Arras. He was hallowed as a Member last summer. We meet for most of a Saturday about every 6 weeks, usually in Heidelberg, and once for a weekend if possible. This has proved most convenient as we live widely spread in Munich, Nuremberg, Basel (Switzerland), Darmstadt and points between.

#### **Rhine-Main Group**

Six members make up this relatively new group, meeting monthly for the last three years in rotating locations in the region around Frankfurt.

#### **North Rhine-Westphalia Group I**

This group is the one established for the longest time. The 8 members meet regularly.

#### **North Rhine-Westphalia Group II**

This is as yet a small Family Group that is forming since last autumn's German Plenary.

#### **Berlin-Brandenburg Group**

Meeting regularly in the Berlin region are 9 people, one of whom is new. They took responsibility for organisation of the Community's presence at the bi-annual Protestant Kirchentag (), held last May in Berlin and Wittenberg.

### **2. German Protestant Church Assembly (Kirchentag)**

Once again we had a location for offering worship services and events at the Kirchentag. This year the partner was the Berlin City Mission, and their building was rather on the margin, away from most of the thousands of Kirchentag events (Bible studies, political discussions, worship services, etc.) Therefore far fewer visitors than expected found there way to us.

In the thick program book for the entire Kirchentag it was also not so easy to find all of our events. For those well advertised attendance was good; for the others, less so. Nonetheless it was worth the efforts made because of the good new contacts made.

We leave it up to the Groups and individuals if they will take on the work of organising a Kirchentag presence, which can take various forms and lasts 1 ½ to 2 years. Best is a core group that is located at or very near to the Kirchentag location. Next Kirchentag in 2019 is in Dortmund (in North Rhine-Westphalia); in 2021 it will be in Frankfurt (region Rhine-Main).

### **3. German book as fund-raiser for the Abbey**

In time for the Kirchentag a small "Communications" committee produced a lovely book of atmospheric pictures of Iona and various texts, translated into German, from Community people. Costs were higher than expected and so covered through a request for voluntary contributions, which many made. In the meantime, with all costs covered, *all proceeds go straight into the Capital Campaign fund for the Abbey renovations.*

The Bookshop on Iona also sold the book, which was well-received by German visitors there, and individual orders are still coming in.

### **4. Iona "Continental" Meeting, Salzburg, Austria, 7 -10 September**

The recent Coracle had a good article about this meeting. This was the fifth such European gathering, held every two years in a different country. Germany was responsible in 2015; 2017's was organised by the Austrians and Swiss and took place in the middle of Salzburg. Eight of us from Germany attended. We led prayers one night, as it's customary for various countries to prepare these for a morning or evening. Everyone was very happy that eight from the Community came from Scotland and England, more than ever before. Theme was "Caring and Sharing": We are in good hands, so let us take care of each other. In 2019 we will meet in The Netherlands. The atmosphere from the very beginning was warm and open, and the meeting was lively, refreshing, and moving. Many friends see one another only at these gatherings, but a lot of us are on a hospitality list and we're encouraging its use when traveling.

*Beverly Olson-Dopffel, Associate, Germany Convenor*

## Dutch Iona Group

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In 2017 The Dutch Iona group has had many activities. There were four main events in 2017: the Iona weekend in Schoorl in spring, Columba's day, an introductory day with Graham Maule 'about Hope' and a weekend with Philip Newell.

Our various regional groups of which there are... are struggling to maintain enough members for their gatherings. Illness and ageing members are somewhat of a problem. Nevertheless, a new regional group in Almere is on the rise, with many activities and a very active organisation. All regional groups send a representative to our central coordination group which gathers twice a year and one of them has for the first joined us.

The Iona weekend from 25 - 28 May in Schoorl was about Celebration and Conservation of Creation. The reception of this weekend was good and there were many attendants, both new and old.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of June we held a guided city walk in Zutphen, home of one of our regional groups and after dinner there was a service in the Lutheran church. All in all a good program.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of October we came together in Tilburg, in the predominantly Catholic part of the Netherlands where we haven't had many activities as of yet. Graham Maule told us about different tactics of engaging people in worship and the elements of rituals. A translation was provided as well. The turnout was lower than expected, but with the inspiring Graham Maule, diversity of workshops and a wonderful service, everyone present had a great day.

During the weekend of 17-19 November we have enjoyed the company of Philip Newell in the Lioba monastery. Here he outlined the themes of his book 'The Rebirthing of God'. With a nice pace, which allowed us to understand the sometimes controversial topics, he guided us through it. Additionally, we could join the services of the Benedictines and we held a small pilgrimage. A rather peaceful weekend which gave many of us something to think about. With around 30 participants the attendance was very good.

It was an eventful 2017 and we hope that we continue to be an active community in the Netherlands in the coming years.

*Casper Silvis   Rob Mengerink*