

Iona Community New Members Programme – starting September 2025





Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in the Iona Community. In this booklet you'll find information about the two-year discernment process. You can also find out more about our membership, our Common Concerns, our programme and our story at www.iona.org.uk.

Our New Members Programme is primarily a discernment journey. It is a time of mutual support and reflection on faith and life; reflection and action. It is a two-year programme when New Members (in both first and second year) meet with one another and with Members of the Community both on-site and online.

While New Members meet together as a group throughout the two years, each New Member is also expected to find their primary locus of belonging with the Iona Community in their local Family Group and Region.

Throughout the programme we will model and explore the experience of being an intentional, global, 'gathered and scattered' faith-community.

If you are interested in being part of this journey, please contact me and I'll send you the application form!

With love and solidarity,

Ruth Harvey, Leader
ruth@iona.org.uk
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January 2025



Application Process

1. **Contact the Leader:** write to Ruth Harvey at ruth@iona.org.uk. She'll usually encourage you to do the following:
2. **Get involved and discern:** join us as an Associate Member, for around two years. That way we get to know you, and you get to know us through our local Family Group, and our Common Concern Networks. Find ways that are comfortable for you to prayerfully reflect on your sense of calling to membership.
3. **Apply:** complete and return the application form that Ruth will send to you. Ruth and another Member will then arrange a conversation with you to explore your application.
4. **Join:** The names of those recommended for membership will be presented to Council with a view to starting the Programme in September.



The Purpose of the New Members Programme:

1. **Share and learn** about the life and witness of the Iona Community through engaging in the Rule of Life.
2. **Build community** through getting to know other New Members, joining in with the life of Members in Family Groups, Regions, CCNs and plenary gatherings. This is part of 'the common task'.
3. **Engage** in practical and challenging tasks and projects for the common good.
4. **Celebrate and deepen** our life and faith together through reflection on the [Purpose](#) and [Rule](#) of the Iona Community,

Programme Flow

In both years, New Members are expected to:

1. Attend four New Members Programme Sessions
 - i. Introduction and Welcome session – usually in September, online
 - ii. Living by the Rule – usually in October/November, online or onsite.
 - iii. Living by the Rule – usually in April/May at our Camas Adventure Centre, or at Iona Abbey for 6-days. We are actively looking for parallel centres where we can run this session in other parts of the UK and the world.
 - iv. Introduction to the Global Community – usually in June, online.
2. Attend the Glasgow Weekend which includes the Community's Annual General Meeting, the Hallowing of New Members, and the ColumbaFest - usually held in early June.
3. Meet with their 'mentor'.
4. Undertake a local project, perhaps with a Member of Community, relating to some aspect of the Community's concerns.
5. contribute to the cohesiveness of the group and group identity through social media or through any another other medium that is appropriate

During **Year Two**, as well as the above, New Members are expected to:

1. share about their project with other New Members during the Spring Gathering;
2. meet individually with the Leader or member of the New Members Advisory Group during the Spring Gathering to talk about for their participation in the NMP as part of the discernment about going forward to being hallowed.

Getting started

From the start of the programme, New Members will receive all communications that Members receive.

This means you will

- continue to receive Coracle and
- our monthly eCoracle (always sent out on the last Friday of the month). After your interview, you will be
- be included in mailings to the New Members group, ready for the first session in September
- be invited to join the Members private FB and
- be invited to join the Members What's App groups.

Notwithstanding these online methods of connecting, the primary method for communicating with Members remains email.

Before this first session of the programme, if you have not already done so, we'll help you

- Join in with your local Family Group, on site or on line if there is no on site alternative
- Connect you with your Regional Group
- Introduce you to the Common Concern Networks
- Help you identify a Mentor from within your Family Group

Joining in and Attendance

We ask New Members to attend at least 80% of each year's NMP, Family Group meetings and whole Community gatherings (for which there will always be an electronic option).

We realise that individual situations, including family and caring commitments, work, voluntary commitments, health and well-ness, may make it difficult for some New Members to attend all the Gatherings; we do our best to be sensitive and flexible. Sometimes a New Member will 'defer' for a year before starting Year 2.

Purpose	The Iona Community New Members Programme is designed to provide a framework and space for enquirers to discern their journey of faith within the Iona Community. By 'discern' we mean engage deeply with one another on the question: how am I being called to live out my life of contemplation and action? To what extent is the Iona Community a nourishing context for this journey?
Programme Summary	The Programme follows a two-year cycle: Year A/B, which cover the key aspects of the Rule. It doesn't matter whether you begin in Year A or Year B. Alongside this programme there are ongoing practices which New Members are encouraged to keep.
Locations	The ethic of meeting together, and forging community is strong. At the same time we are mindful of our commitment to climate justice and our care for the planet. Whole New Member gatherings will be both in-person, and held electronically. Increasingly the locus of the NMP will be within our global regions, to minimise travel and to maximise strengthening our local and regional belonging. We will aim for no more than two in-person gatherings annually, including the Hallowing.

Initial Discernment Process	Ways of Working Together	New Members Programme some self-directed, some online, some in person, some alone, some together a rolling programme - can begin in either Year A or Year B		Ongoing Practices
<p>Step 1. Discernment in Family Group (at any time of year) Existing Associate/YAG Members of two years standing enquire first through their Family Group. On discerning a call to deeper membership, with the blessing of their FG, they write a letter to the Leader.</p> <p>Step 2. Discernment with Leadership (at any time of year) the Leader and another Member meet with the enquirer, explore this stage of their calling and agree next steps. Leader makes a recommendation to Council.</p> <p>Step 3. Discernment with the Community (usually in time for the AGM) the name of the enquirer is brought to Council via the Community Life Committee for affirmation. Names of New Members are then shared with the wider Membership at the AGM, or, if later than the AGM, with Council directly.</p> <p>Step 4: New Members Programme (two years, September - August) continue discernment through the two year New Members Programme.</p> <p>Step 5: Hallowing Usually on the first weekend of June during the Glasgow Gathering/AGM</p>	<p>respectful listening: we will listen in order to understand, with the intent of being influenced, not necessarily to agree;</p> <p>respectful talking: we will allow one voice to be heard at a time. This includes 'stilling the voice in my own head';</p> <p>respectful tone: we will take care with the words, and with the tone we use in conversation;</p> <p>respectful sharing: beyond this room/space, we agree to share only non-attributable wisdom;</p> <p>respectful air-space: we will monitor how much, and how little we speak.</p>	YEAR A	YEAR B	<p>Journalling: Regular reflective practice on the Rule and its impact on your life.</p> <p>Mentor: Identify a Member, probably in your FG or Regoin, who will accompany you through the NMP as an ally, a listener, a companion, a guide.</p> <p>Project: a) time spent considering a project that will i) stretch you and ii) connect you with the life of the Iona Community then b) complete and share this project with the Community. A project can take any form.</p> <p>Family Group: Local involvement, prayer, support and sharing with Members and Associate Members close to where you live.</p> <p>Region, Plenaries, AGM and Community Week: Regional involvement with other in a wider geographical reach focussing on issues and concerns at the heart of the Iona Community.</p> <p>Common Concern Networks: Join one, two or more of the seven: Environment; Faith and Spirituality; Israel/Palestine; LGBTQ+; Migration and Refugees; Reconciliation, Peace-making and Disarmament.</p> <p>Committees and Council: NMs can be elected to Committees or Council but they cannot vote at the AGM until they are hallowed.</p>
		Welcome, Introductions and Orientation (on line)		
		Living by the Rule 1: Prayer, bible and wider reflection include	Living by the Rule 2: Working for justice, peace, wholeness and reconciliation	
		Living by the Rule 3: Accounting for our gifts, money, time and earth's resources	Living by the Rule 4: Sharing in the corporate life and organisation of the Iona Community	
		Introduction to the global community (online)		



Being Hallowed

The Hallowing (or blessing) Service usually takes place at the Glasgow Weekend which includes the AGM. New Members are usually accompanied at the Hallowing service by their Mentor. During this service, in addition to New Members being Hallowed, all Members of the Iona Community rededicate themselves to the purpose of the Community. It's a joyous time for celebration, usually followed by a shared celebration meal and a bit of a party!

New Members are eligible for election to committees at any point in the process. You are not eligible to vote at Plenaries, whether at elections or on other business, until you have been hallowed into full membership; and you are not eligible for election to Council, or as convener or vice-convener of a committee, until the AGM after your hallowing.

Membership is renewed annually. Once you are hallowed as a Member, you will continue to take part in the annual accounting and 'with us' process, each Spring, discerning whether or not to re-commit to membership for another year.



The Commitment

New Members make – and Members renew – this commitment during the Hallowing Service

In the presence of our beloved friends,
in the company of Members near and far,
and in the name of God,
Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,
we commit ourselves to the purpose
and to the Rule of the Iona Community.

We, being many, are one in Christ.

We will celebrate the wholeness of our life together.
Where it is fractured, we will work for reconciliation.
Where it is diminished, we will strive for its fullness.
So God help us now and always. Amen.



Support and Mentoring

The Leader and NMAG are available throughout the programme to support the New Member. NMs are encouraged to reach out for support and companionship through the New Members group, and through becoming involved in their local Family Group, Region, and in Common Concern Networks. NMs are also encouraged to deepen reflective practices throughout the journey, including e.g. journaling, spiritual companionship, or other reflective practices.

A key element of support for New Members from the beginning of the programme is to identify (with the Leader's help if necessary) a Mentor from their Family Group or Region. It is the responsibility of the New Member to initiate this relationship. A Mentor will be an Iona Community Member usually from their Family Group who will undertake to 'mentor' them and reflect with them on practicing the Rule in daily life during their period on the Programme. The Mentor should be available for regular support, encouragement and on-going discernment, and may accompany the New Member at their Hallowing.



Role of the Mentor

An Iona Community New Member's Mentor should be:

- an Iona Community Member of several years standing;
- in the same Family Group as the New Member;
- someone with time/capacity to support the NM & not currently mentoring another NM;
- depending on location of the NM, a Mentor may be from outside the NMs Family Group

The Role of a New Member Mentor includes:

- being available for support, encouragement and ongoing discernment;
- supporting the NM in understanding and living by the Rule in daily life particularly as they 'account' for the first time in their Family Group;
- supporting the NM in planning and completing their project;
- supporting the New Member at the Hallowing Service which is normally during the Glasgow Weekend in early June;
- helping the New Member integrate into their Family Group and Region, ensuring the FG is open to being changed by the New Member;
- supporting the NM to get involved in Iona Community gatherings including AGM, whole-Community gatherings, Community Weeks and CCNs.

The New Members Project: introduction

Projects were introduced into the New Members Programme to form a focus for exploring the Rule of Life.

In the early days, when members lived and worked together on the rebuilding of the Abbey, this was a very practical project.

But what did membership mean back 'in the real world'?

The project has evolved, to become a way to dive deep into one aspect of life in this community. We offer 'ten top tips' on the next page!



The New Members Project: ten top tips

When planning your project:

1. **Passion:** make sure the project works for you – do something that both interests and extends you in faith and action.
2. **Share:** the project is a way that new members get to know each other – you'll be asked to share your project in your second year with other NMs at the spring gathering.
3. **Relax:** the Project does not need to be written up and is not assessed.
4. **The Rule:** projects normally explore and extend our commitment to some part of the Rule.
5. **Talk:** discuss your project with your mentor; and with others in your Family Group and Region – maybe offer to host a FG session on your Project.
6. **Extend:** projects should be achievable while also extending you beyond your comfort zone.
7. **Be yourself:** Projects should reflect who you are.
8. **Pray & Reflect:** the project is part of the discernment process.
9. **Explore:** look at past NMs projects; ask the second years for advice (see next page).
10. **Give it a go:** try to get started within your first year.



The New Members Project: some examples

Here are some examples of past projects:

1. **Blog:** prepared and published a blog relating to the Rule of the IC.
2. **Birdbox:** joined a local wildlife support network and made a bird box.
3. **Refugee network:** supported a local refugee network.
4. **Song:** prepared a daily song and prayer for the Members What's App group during lock down, then turned this into a short booklet.
5. **Booklet:** produced a short booklet about the life of Ralph Morton, the first 'deputy leader', with George, of the Iona Community.
6. **Working Group:** set up a working group on Disability



Finance

In Year One New Members continue to pay the Associate Member's donation, until accounting to Family Groups through the 'With Us' process in the April after starting the NMP. Thereafter, New Members are expected to play a full part in the economic discipline. Your Family Group and Mentor will talk you through how to do this.

Cost of New Members' Programme

- 1. Travel:** New Members are asked to cover their own travel costs in first year. In second year, as you will be contributing to the finances of the Community through the economic witness, travel costs to attend Community gatherings can be claimed through the travel pool. A separate paper on how to claim through the Travel Pool will be sent to you.
- 2. Accommodation:** New Members are asked to cover accommodation costs of the November/December weekend gathering and the Glasgow Weekend; the cost for the latter should be minimal as accommodation can often be with local Members. The Iona Community will meet the accommodation costs of the Spring residential gathering at Camas or at Iona Abbey. If you need to bring companions/carers or dependents to Camas, this is usually at your own expense.

In the same way as Members normally do, New Members will be asked to pay for attendance at Community Week and whole-Community gatherings.

- 3. Finally:** Finance should never be the deciding factor in considering Membership. The Iona Community does have ways of covering these costs where necessary. If you will need financial support to join the Iona Community, please discuss this in confidence with the Leader as part of your application process or as soon after that as possible.

Year A: 2025/2026 (year A, 2026/2027, will follow a similar pattern, with a focus on Rules 1 and 3)

Programme sessions	Dates and Times <i>(all in UK times)</i>	Locations
1.Introductions	Saturday September 13 th 2025, 18:00 – 20:00	Online only
2.Living by the Rule – Rule 2	<i>Either on-site:</i> Thursday 23 rd October – Friday 24 th October 2025, 14:00 – 14:00	Venue tbc; as part of the autumn plenary which then runs from 24 th – 26 th October
	<i>Or on-line:</i> dates to be confirmed	links to follow
3.Living by the Rule – Rule 4	<i>Either on-site:</i> Monday April/May 2026 dates tbc	Camas Adventure Centre, Mull
	<i>Or on-line:</i> dates to be confirmed	links to follow
4.Global Community	Saturday 16 th May 2026, 18:00 – 20:00	Online only
Additional events	Dates and Times <i>(all in UK times)</i>	Locations
Glasgow Weekend, including Hallowing for 2 nd Years	Friday 12 th – Sunday 14 th June 2026	Glasgow
Community Week	25 th July – 31 st July 2026	Iona Abbey

New Members Advisory Group (NMAG) as at 31/3/2024

Ali Marhsall	NW England Region
Christian Maclean	Highland Region
Elaine Gisbourne	NE England Region
Jane Hodges	SE England Region
John Dillon	USA Region
Karin Schmid	German-Speaking Region (DACH)
Maddey Watson	YAG Member, SE England Region
Rachael Yates	East Scotland Region
Richard Sharples	SW England Region
Ruth Harvey	(Leader) NW England Region
Teun Kruijswijk Jansen	Dutch Region

New Members Advisory Group – purpose

1. **Advise:** Advise Leader and CLC on all issues to do with membership including new membership, levels of and distinctions between membership, and global membership.
2. **Strategy:** Work with the Community Life Committee to ensure NMP links strategically and in practice with Iona Community Learn and the Strategic Goals of the Iona Community.
3. **Companionship:** Support New Members through engaging in the New Members Programme and offering companionship throughout the programme, in addition to that offered by Mentors.
4. **Delivery:** Develop and review New Members Programme, including support delivery of all aspects of the programme.