

PARISH PROFILE

KINGUSSIE

linked with

LAGGAN and NEWTONMORE



Prepared March 2024

Parish Profile

Kingussie Parish Church Linked with Laggan and Newtonmore

The parishes of Kingussie, Laggan and Newtonmore are situated in the beautiful Cairngorms National Park, a place of outstanding natural beauty with a diverse range of outdoor activities. These include cycling, hillwalking and water sports, with the area being renowned as a stronghold to shinty. Kingussie Parish Church is linked with Laggan and Newtonmore, originally two separate parishes, but now united. Laggan Parish also includes the village of Dalwhinnie which regrettably no longer has a church. Both parishes have new housing developments either planned or under construction. In Kingussie, building is currently taking place, and in Newtonmore building will start in Summer 2024.

History

In Kingussie, worship has been taken place on the site of the church since stone age times. The original church building, built in 1792, was razed to the ground in a fire in 1924 and rebuilt in 1926, thanks to the Heritors, who paid for the rebuilding.



In Newtonmore, St Bride's Church is in the centre of the village and was constructed in 1957 from the fabrics of St Columba's Church and St Andrew's Church, which were both in Newtonmore, and were previously united.



In Laggan, the church has existed since 1785 and was rebuilt in 1842 but regrettably as part of the Presbytery Plan of Abernethy Presbytery (now Highlands and Hebrides Presbytery), Laggan Church is due to close before the end of 2024 and be sold.



Insh village church is a small church which is looked after as part of Kingussie parish, though not part of Church of Scotland properties.

Kingussie, Laggan and Newtonmore churches are in good order. Kingussie and Newtonmore both have small halls used for church activities and sometimes these are hired out. Laggan itself has a village hall which is not too far from the church.



Our last Minister retired in June 2021, and, subsequently, we have been assisted by Interim Moderators and a locum minister. Both congregations have a healthy Worship Group of volunteers who take services in order to sustain church activity and maintain regular attendance at Sunday worship. All three churches do not currently have services every Sunday, and at least once a month, there is a joint service in one of the churches on a rota basis, while Laggan and Newtonmore also have one joint monthly service.

After what has very much been a 'holding operation', our congregations are very ready to move forward, and there is a growing excitement to see where God, and a new minister, will lead our congregations.

Both churches operate under the Unitary Constitution with focus groups operating and reporting to each Kirk Session as appropriate. The Kirk Sessions meet every second month or jointly on demand.

Both Kirk Sessions recently voted to depart from the current and historic practice of the church in relation to human sexuality.

Christian Education

In the recent past, several activities involving children, including Messy Church, Bubblegum and Fluff and Rhyme Time were active, but Covid sadly curtailed these activities and they have not restarted. There is an enthusiasm to see similar activity restart, and it is hoped that there will be renewed vigour from the appointment of a new minister.

A Communicants' Class has recently been advertised, as there are a number of people wishing to join the Church. This has yet to commence.

In the last few months, a Bible Study group has been started in Newtonmore, led by two members of Laggan and Newtonmore but it would be good to have a minister to assist and expand this activity.

Connections are maintained with all the local primary schools and the High School in Kingussie, most recently with a view to assisting families who were experiencing financial hardship during this economic downturn.

Prior to the COVID lockdowns, Kingussie and Newtonmore hosted end of term services for the schools for Easter, Summer and Christmas services and some of these have restarted. There were also regular visits to the primary school assemblies. Before Covid, there was a Scripture Union in the High School but this is no longer operational. It would be wonderful to see this activity really active again.

We are aware that the Catholic Church priest and the Free Church preacher both visit the Kingussie schools and have addressed assemblies with the High School students. The Head teacher at the High School has intimated that a Church of Scotland Minister would be welcome too.

We see the strengthening of the connection with the schools as a priority for our new minister and this would hopefully encourage more church activity. A sharing of ideas with the schools, as to how this could be achieved, would be a welcome target.

Community Involvement

Laggan has a Helping Hands which holds monthly lunches in Laggan Hall. Church members are involved in acting as the hosts, and several of our church members, with Laggan connections, attend.



The Warm Space project in Kingussie opens one day a week serving refreshments throughout the day with soup and bread at lunchtime. Now known as the Community Café, numbers attending have increased. Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS) have facilitated a meeting of the Shinty Memories Group on a few occasions. This is a group of people in later years, some with early-stage dementia. We have played host to a local walking group and now have a young group of

students from the High School volunteering at the Community Cafe. Elders deliver soup on a Thursday to housebound members, and this is gratefully received, allowing a short pastoral visit to ensure they know they are not forgotten. External funding was obtained to support this initiative.

Music plays a big part in Church life in Kingussie, with a 4 part choir who provide an introit and anthem each Sunday. The organ, which was rebuilt supported by lottery funding, has attracted a number of talented organists from the U.K, Italy and Holland to take the console for recitals. These bring in funds for the Church, with a portion going to the ongoing care of the organ. The organ has its own Facebook page and iMovies and these ensure that all with an interest in organ music, can hear it played, and new pieces are added regularly.



In Kingussie, concerts have been organised, and have included performers from the local High School, an Inverness High School for a Christmas Cheer event, the Badenoch Chorale and the Church choir. All have been very much enjoyed and are regularly reported in the local paper.

While there are very few children attending Church services in Kingussie, there is a healthy rolling number of sixteen little ones who attend on a weekly basis, one morning a week, accompanied by a mixture of parents, child minders, carers, grandparents and family friends. The Group operates with a Church elder and two ladies who are not Church members. This is perhaps an area where a new minister could engage with the grownups and children, and encourage attendance in Church, say, at an appropriate family style service.

In Newtonmore, there is a Warm Spaces. weekly event in the Village Hall which itself is more suited for the purpose than the Church Hall. It is organised by a church member and is well supported. The Badenoch Chorale practices in St Bride's on a Sunday night and offers concerts and an annual coffee morning. The Chorale started about fourteen years ago when a choir was formed from the Kingussie, Laggan and Newtonmore congregations for a visit from the Moderator of the Church of Scotland and it has gone from strength to strength, with thirty-five members including a number who have no church connection.

Not surprisingly, many from both congregations are heavily involved in community activities. Ian Hall, one of the elders, produces a programme called The New Normal on the first Sunday of every month on the local radio station Speysound, covering Christian topics and events of interest. Angus Armstrong, another of our members, is a director of Christian Engineers in Development and has recently been in Rwanda, looking at various projects which would help the locals there to look after themselves. From time to time the congregations are made aware of what progress is being made on both activities.

Other community events include a barbecue picnic on the sands at Ardverikie usually in July. In August at the local Highland Games, Laggan and Newtonmore have for several years erected a small tent and provided soup and other refreshments for sale for church funds. At Christmas, a Christmas card is distributed to all the houses in Newtonmore and Laggan, setting out the times of the Christmas services in these communities, and wishing all a Merry Christmas.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care has suffered while the congregations have not had a minister. In our communities the news of illness can spread easily as we do look out for one another and therefore, bad news tends to spread quickly throughout the area. Following the death of two young men in our area, the Church was recently called upon by the local Shinty Club to provide support to its members, and a local retired Church of Scotland minister has since taken up the role of Chaplain.

Elders' visits and support have recommenced following Covid, but more on an informal basis. To reduce expenditure, communications are e-mailed to our parishioners with e-mail addresses, and the rest are given a hard copy Three or four times a year, a Newsletter is prepared giving news of church matters in respect of both congregations, but we are only too well aware that we have difficulty in keeping in regular contact with some of our members who are no longer able to attend church regularly. This is an area which requires attention, and it is another priority for a new minister.

Kingussie has a presence on the Social Media domain of Facebook and provides an evening prayer and a daily reading. Started during the lockdown periods, this was and is a way of keeping in touch with our Church members and our community. The page has gained quite a following, and there was no reason to stop once lockdown restrictions ceased. An elder maintains control of the Facebook pages. The churches have a new website currently under development named kingussielaggannewtonmorechurch.com.

Both congregations socialise after church each Sunday over coffee and tea. St Bride's has a well-attended soup and pudding lunch on the first Sunday of most months, with food provided by members of the congregation,

The local residential homes, The Wade Centre, The Mains Nursing Home and Abbeyfield have all benefitted in the past from short services, small concerts and pastoral visits from the minister but restrictions due to COVID meant visits ceased and these have not returned to previous levels, so it would be good to reinstate these.

Worship Life, and Ecumenical Activity

Currently the Worship Group meets every three months to prepare a services schedule as a means of ensuring regular services in all the churches. On the first Sunday of the month Laggan and Newtonmore have been holding a joint service in Newtonmore (followed by soup and pudding) and on the second and third Sundays, there has been a service in Laggan at 9-30a.m. Kingussie have been meeting at their usual time of 10-30a.m. and St Bride's at 11-30a.m. Insh has an evening service on the third Sunday of the month at 6-00p.m. and on the fourth Sunday, there is a joint service at 10-30a.m. in one of the churches on a rotational basis. The schedule is made available to the congregations.

Communion has not been held as regularly as in the past during the period we have been without a minister. Previously, communion was held quarterly and in Newtonmore, there was a short communion service after the normal service in the other months.

Real support and friendships have grown with our friends from the Catholic Church, and a warm relationship is enjoyed with the Free Church. When the Catholic Church had a flood and were unable to meet in their church, they met in Kingussie for a number of weeks. It would be good to foster some interdenominational activity with services say at Easter, though we have not been able to progress this without the support of a minister, and this would be warmly welcomed.

Laggan and Newtonmore are twinned with Libis and Kostalec in the Czech Republic, and prior to Covid, there were exchanges between the congregations. Their pastor Mirek Pfan also has church responsibilities in Ukraine and one of our elders tries to keep up the contact and we pray for each other regularly.

We have been extremely fortunate to have a retired minister Rev Christine Ritchie as our Interim Moderator since January 2023 and she has given a substantial part of her time and has taken numerous services. OLM Rev Mary Ellen Thomson has also given us her support, particularly with Kingussie and Insh.

Both congregations are represented on the new Highlands and Hebrides Presbytery. Kingussie have one representative and Laggan and Newtonmore have three, one of whom is on the Presbytery finance committee.

Finance

Both congregations have drifted along financially during the vacancy, and all expenditure has been met from available funds including work on the manse and grounds amounting to £32,204 paid by the congregations. However, funds have diminished and both congregations are aware that expenditure has been at a reduced level without the expenses of a minister and therefore, in due course, a major effort will be required to improve the income. This need has been flagged up in the recent March newsletter, circulated to both congregations.

The current Giving to Grow assessments for 2024 are £15,864 for Kingussie and £28,763 for Laggan and Newtonmore but these are both currently subject to vacancy allowances.

The accounts for Laggan and Newtonmore for the year ended 31st December 2023 have been approved by the Kirk Session and are available but the accounts for Kingussie are still work in progress.

Manse

There is a manse in Fort William Road, Newtonmore which has not been occupied during the vacancy. The manse has been made wind and watertight but, requires additional work to bring it up to a reasonable standard, and estimates for this work have been obtained and are being considered. The site is substantial, and planning opportunities are currently under investigation with Highland Council. The personal housing requirements of a new minister will be given due consideration before any decision is made. Whatever the decision, there will be financial considerations to take into account when making it, and contact has been made with the Presbytery Property Committee regarding the procedure we should now follow to get permission to carry out the required works, to support a new minister or its eventual sale, if the latter is selected, and a different provision is made for manse accommodation.



Staffing

Both Kingussie and Laggan and Newtonmore have an organist playing at all services, John Crombie plays in Kingussie and Elizabeth Thomson covers Laggan and Newtonmore. The congregations each have a cleaner who is paid on an hourly basis.

Currently the Highland Council Public Toilet in Laggan is managed by a representative of Laggan and Newtonmore congregation. A cleaner is employed and paid from community funds which were given to Laggan Church for that purpose. This arrangement is likely to cease in 2025 when funds run out. Highland Council contribute via their Comfort Scheme and public donations also help to maintain this service.

Statistics as of 2023

	Kingussie	Laggan	Newtonmore
Population	2013		1397
Over 65	22%		25%
Children of school age	249		215
Church Elders	10		13
Church attendance	30	15	30
Church Roll	65Mem 30Ad		81Mem 50Ad

Website Information available on Google
newtonmore.com
kingussie.co.uk
kingussielaggannewtonmorechurch.com

Mission Statement

We seek to be invigorated by God along with a new team leader, to ensure that our churches continue to be relevant and inclusive to our communities, encouraging more to learn of God's love for us all.

Our Mission Statement Wishes

--our congregations are very ready to move forward, and there is a growing excitement to see where God and a new minister, will lead our congregations

-there is an enthusiasm to see children and youth groups restarted, and we hope the congregation will get a renewed vigour with the help from a new leader

-pastoral care requires attention, and is another priority for our congregations when we have a new minister

-it would be good to foster some inter denominational activity and this would be warmly welcomed

-a strengthening of the connections with the schools would hopefully encourage more church activity, and a sharing of ideas would be welcome.

-a new minister could engage with adults and children, and encourage attendance at church at family style services

-a new leader would encourage us to deepen our Christian faith

-a new minister would help us to reach out to the communities.

Kingussie, Laggan and Newtonmore vision

Our vision for the coming ministerial term is to build foundations to ensure a progressive and dynamic Christian community shedding Christ's light for future generations in our Strath.

This will be achieved by making Christ's love known in all corners of our communities through broad involvement and activities. All underpinned by sincere Christian fellowship in small groups, local Churches and shared ecumenical worship.

What might this look like? "A progressive and dynamic Christian community"

This would be a sincere God centred Christian community that is outward looking and endeavouring to be the hands, feet, and voice of Jesus in all things. Communicating the message of Christ's love in a way that is accessible to all in our materialistic 21st century with an eye to ensuring the Church continues beyond the current generation.

What would this look like? “. . . making Christ's love known in all corners of our communities . . . “

Direct community involvement in our many communities across all sectors from toddlers to those in their twilight years. This to be done in a manner that ensures our actions reflect Christ's message of love and forgiveness. We should be welcoming, listening, inclusive and “socially adventurous”. This will be seen through our involvement in, and where appropriate running, a broad range of clubs and activities; increased involvement in schools; visiting of the ill and elderly. It is not expected that our minister will be directly involved in all these activities, they would play to their strengths and encourage others to do likewise.

What would this look like? “. . . sincere Christian fellowship . . . “

Our collective expression of worship must change to make it more attractive to our current generations, whilst not compromising on Christ's message of worshiping in spirit and truth. At the same time the established pattern of worship are a comfort to those for whom it is familiar and their needs must not be forgotten. It is likely that this will require more than one style of services either on the same day or on alternative weeks. We have a number of week time fellowship groups and these are to be encouraged and built on. In these times of dwindling attendance we should build bridges with our wider Christian family in the Strath, joining in worship and activities periodically.

Bible Quotation

So, let's do it – full of belief, confident that we are presentable inside and out. Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps His word. Let's see how inventive we can be in our encouraging love and helping out. (The Message--Hebrews 10.24)