

# INVERNESS EAST CHURCH



## PARISH PROFILE

## Contacts

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## Introduction

The Inverness East Church became a vacant charge on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019 with the retirement of Rev. Prof. Andrew T.B. McGowan.

Our prayer is that God would place in the East Church one of His choosing to continue the witness and mission for His glory here in Inverness. As will be seen from this profile, this is a busy and lively church. Special skills of pastoral care, youth work and parish outreach would be an extra blessing to this congregation.

The church is 220 years old. It departed from the Established Church in the Disruption of 1843, followed by a period as a United Free congregation and finally returning to re-join the Church of Scotland in 1925.

The East Church has been blessed with a long, rich and unbroken evangelical tradition led by a series of ministers faithful to the Gospel.

Ministers tend to stay a long time in this charge with the last three ministers having amassed a total of sixty years between them!



## Worship

There are two services of worship each Sunday, at 11am and 6.30pm. The presentation of worship is traditional and biblically based. Bibles (NIV version) are placed on each pew. Intercessory prayers are led by the elders and the morning Bible readings are delivered by members of the congregation.

Multimedia is well utilised to aid worship and praise and singing is accompanied by the organ or our Music Group. An update to our audio-visual system to allow livestreaming of services is underway. Services have been recorded each Sunday during the lockdown period.

Sunday School and crèche meet during the morning service.



A Gaelic service is held quarterly per annum to cater for a number of Gaelic speakers within the congregation. In the last ten years these services have been conducted by a rota of Gaelic speaking ministers or elders.

The sacrament of Communion is observed four times a year with a Preparatory Service on Friday and Prayer Meeting on Saturday as part of the Communion weekend. The current number of communicants is 200 and the number of adherents on the roll is 75. Good numbers attend the Sunday morning sacrament of Communion. The Sunday School children come in for this part of the service.



Our weekly Prayer meeting and Bible Study is on Wednesday. There are two sittings for this - at 1pm and 7.30pm - attracting thirty to forty people in total.

Each month, on a Tuesday lunchtime, a 'Word at One' service takes place - a brief service of worship in the Church followed by lunch in the hall - to serve those in the city centre who may wish to attend a mid-day Christian service.

For the last ten years, "Fellowship Groups" have been meeting, led by five elders and sited in five homes throughout the city. These informal gatherings have further enhanced worship, through study and prayer.

## Profile

The average weekly overall attendance at morning worship is 200, with evening worship attracting 60 people.

As fitting with the national Church profile, it is evident that those of the 50+ age group now predominate. There has been a small decline in numbers largely due to controversy within the National Church with defections to other denominations. Despite this, we feel the numbers are now stabilised and the congregation is united, in good heart and optimistic for the future. It is evident that there is a large hole in numbers attending church between the 20-40 age category. Despite the current population demography within the church, those of a younger age are very much welcomed and treasured and it is so welcome to see a number of our Sunday school children being taken to church by grandparents from within the fellowship.

The East Church congregation is famously generous, in spirit and in action. For 2020 the Ministries and Mission Allocation was £63,115. Presbytery dues were £1,772.

## Young people

The Sunday School meets during Sunday morning worship with approximately 25 children attending regularly. A youth group for senior school pupils meets monthly on Friday evenings with numbers up to 10.

A well established and very active Girls' Brigade – the 2<sup>nd</sup> Inverness Company - meet in the Lower Hall weekly. This has been a strong influence for the girls and also an encouragement to the congregation.

During the summer holidays, a Holiday Club takes place for primary school aged children. This is run by a team of willing volunteers and has proven to be a very popular feature of outreach in our church calendar.

## Parish

The main concentration of population in the current parish is in Raigmore. Raigmore is a self-contained and close-knit community on the edge of the city. There is a primary school which welcomes the East Church chaplaincy, one central shop, community hall and also is the locus for Raigmore Hospital, the large District General Hospital for the Highlands. The Church arranges a bus

to take worshippers from the Raigmore and Drakies estates to Sunday morning Services.

The Parish of Inverness East Church by tradition extends to the east of the church. As typical of many city centre charges the East Church congregation is largely 'gathered' with worshippers belonging to the widest parts of the city. With the dramatic increase in population of Inverness, the parish boundaries have altered by necessity over the years. Under the Presbytery Plan there are to be significant changes to the parish boundary. This is to include a substantial area of potential development to the Eastern suburbs of the city. Presbytery have made it clear that there will also be for the East Church to relocate to this area.

## Outreach

The church holds a strong sense of responsibility to our parish and community following the commands of the Saviour "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone".

There is a history of visitation and we have just completed a ten year outreach in the form of regular Sunday Services, Sunday School and Prayer Meetings to the community of Raigmore within our current parish.

We look forward to the challenge of witness to the new parish once established by Presbytery.

Taking advantage of our city centre location and adjacent to the Bus and Railway Stations, we have an 'Open Doors' Outreach fortnightly on a Friday. This is increased to weekly during the summer period. Passers-by are invited in to the Church for a chat and an opportunity to see the church. Tea and coffee are served.

Once a year, on the Harvest Thanksgiving Saturday, we have an open afternoon outreach to the city centre. A number of people are attracted in to the church to hear a series of short evangelical addresses conducted by the minister interspersed by a programme of musical items led by our Music Group.



## World wide

Our church has partnership with overseas mission in different ways - financially and prayerfully supporting individual missionary partners and organisations. On occasion, missionary partners lead Sunday worship or Prayer meetings.

## Buildings

The church buildings are readily accessible with our office open daily from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

The Church is situated in one of the busiest streets of the City and a stone's throw from the Central Bus Station and the Railway Station. Car parking for worshippers is close by having a multi storey car park 100 yards from the Church door.

The church is a fine old building in very good condition and has a strikingly beautiful interior. However, as befits an ageing building, maintenance is a continuing challenge both to the interior and exterior.

The seating capacity of the East Church is 750 with a large gallery used in the morning services. Worshippers gather downstairs for the evening service.



The church hall is situated at the back of the church, comprising of a large downstairs hall, the size of a badminton court, and a hall upstairs designed for

smaller meetings. There is a very well appointed large kitchen which is extensively used for many occasions.

A newly established Toddlers group meet in the Lower Hall regularly.

The halls are rented to a small number of social and civic groups which also raises our profile and our witness. We also host regular social evenings for fundraising eg for church funds, overseas mission or for students travelling for short mission. An annual music evening/gift day is held each winter for Fabric Fund and this is always well supported.

A new manse for the East Church was purchased in July 2019. This is a new build located in Appin Drive in West Culloden. This is a well-appointed four bedroomed detached house in a good location.

Office bearers of the church act as trustees for the church, hall and manse.

## **Pastoral Care**

The city is divided into 21 districts for the purposes of pastoral care. There are good lines of communication between minister, secretary and elder and one elder is attached to each district. Elders know each member and adherent within their district and face their needs when the occasion arises such as at times of illness or bereavement. The congregation is known to be highly supportive and caring towards each other.

## **Kirk Session/Deacons' Court**

The constitution of the church is Deacons' Court as befitting its United Free Church background. The Kirk Session meets approximately seven times annually. There are 20 elders, all male, on Kirk Session. An annual 'Away Day' takes place each year which further benefits team-work as well as formulating plans for the year.

The Deacons' Court meet four or five times annually chaired by the minister or an appointed elder. The number of deacons corresponds to the number of elders and there is a mix of male and female members on the Deacons' Court. There are strong Finance and Fabric Committees chaired by the Treasurer and Fabric Convener respectively. These committees meet to advise the Deacons' Court, as the need arises.

There is much good will and cordiality in both Kirk Session and Deacons' Court and good lines of communication between both bodies.

## **Inverness/Highlands**

Inverness is a very attractive city. Known as the 'capital of the Highlands', it sits on a beautiful situation on the banks of the River Ness with close access to the beauties of the Highlands.



The city is served by excellent travel links by road, rail and air. Many thousands of tourists are drawn to Inverness throughout the year to visit the city or use it as a vantage point for further travel. Over the summer period particularly a number of visitors visit the church for the morning or evening service.

Inverness has had a dramatic population increase in recent years. There have been a number of major housing and commercial developments in the suburbs, mainly to the south and east of the city.

Most recently, the establishment of the University of the Highlands and Islands campus at Beechwood, east of Inverness, has enticed a number of young people to remain in the Highlands to study as well as attracting students and academic staff in to the city. The East Church minister acts as chaplain to the university.

There are excellent local facilities, good schools, hospital, medical practices and a wide range of cultural and sporting venues.



## **Ecumenical interest**

Relations are good between the different churches in Inverness and on occasion we share resources, prayer and worship with our partners. As befitting a hub city there are many denominations within Inverness. Prof. McGowan was part of a local clergy group which meets periodically.