



Parish Profile

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Welcome

Easter Ross Peninsula Church of Scotland is now able to call a minister on a basis of renewable tenure of 7 years. We are a newly united congregation constituted under a Unitary Constitution, formed on 1st January 2024. At the time of the union all three previous congregations were vacant, and the elders and congregation have been actively participating in the overall functioning of the church, leading new initiatives where we are able and where we understand we have been called to. The increasing warmth and vitality amongst the newly united congregation shows a willingness to change, grow and develop, sharing our faith with each other informally and spontaneously.



Portmahomack Beach

We seek a Minister who will lead us through the challenges we face, so that we may collectively discern God's direction for our way forward together. We need a minister with the calling, desire and skills to preach the Gospel and evangelise our church and our community, supported by those who are already involved in leadership and pastoral care.

Our Kirk Session has affirmed the historic and current doctrine and practice of the Church in relation to human sexuality (including marriage) and their application to the ministers and deacons of the Church.

Our Mission

Our Kirk Session has adopted the following Mission Statement: "*Proclaiming the Gospel through faith, prayer, hope and love.*"

Our Church

Each of the three participating fellowships have their own way of worshipping, and we recognise the need for harmony and diversity in worship as we move forward, respecting where we have come from and where we are being led by the Spirit.

Whilst recognising that teamwork is essential, each centre of worship in the congregation runs its own rota of readers, musicians, AV, cleaning, etc., co-ordinated by the joint Session Clerks. We have a number of willing volunteers, but we recognise the limitations of an ageing congregation and the need for succession planning. However, we are finding people willing to step up and become involved in the practical functions of the church, e.g. hospitality and welcome, audiovisual equipment, readers, cleaning, groundwork, etc., as our united parish discerns God's future for us.



Service of Union at Tain

We currently honour, proclaim and serve our God and His mission in our Parish in several ways, but are open to being guided by our new minister to discern new directions with our new minister's vision and calling.

Sunday Worship

We gather to worship each Sunday morning at 9.30am in both Fearn and Portmahomack, and at 11.30am in Tain.

Currently our Locum Minister leads two out of these three services (one in Tain, and alternately in Fearn and Portmahomack), supported by elders, and visiting preachers. Where the month has a fifth Sunday we may hold a single joint service in one centre.

Tain and Fearn have organists, and all three centres are well equipped with TV screens and sound systems, and all three congregations are used to praising alongside recorded worship music.

Each service includes singing a variety of old and new praise songs, reading and preaching from the Bible, and prayer. The Kirk Session has provided that communion is currently celebrated four times each year.

Services at Tain are recorded on CD and distributed to those unable to attend. During the pandemic services from Tain and Fearn were routinely streamed online. Our website is currently being updated, and our Facebook page is current and active. We have used Zoom during and since lockdown for Bible Study and prayer.



Sunday Worship (café church) at Fearn

Some key features to our worship is:

- Flexible approach to the service at all worship centres, with options for younger families to watch on-screen in the Crèche Room at Tain
- Blended modern and traditional praise on the organ, keyboard, guitar, and also using videos
- Congregational participation in leading worship and Bible reading
- Café Church at Fearn
- Fellowship over tea and coffee before/after services at all worship centres



Sunday Worship at Portmahomack

Fellowship and Worship at other times

In Tain we routinely run Children's Church, Youth Club, 'Mums & Tots' group, Summer Holiday Club and 'Messy Church', as well as involvement in local schools. Realistically, if these witnesses and activities are to continue, we need to encourage and develop fresh involvement from the congregation.



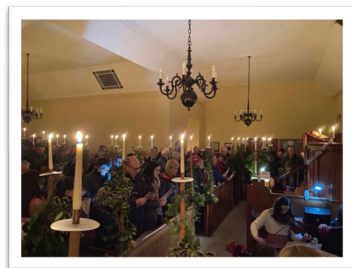
The Messy Church display board at Tain

Midweek meetings for prayer and Bible study take place in Tain and Portmahomack and recently we started a house-group model of Bible Study. 'The Gathering' is a drop-in session held each Tuesday afternoon from 12-4.30pm in Tain, providing food and fellowship, singing and discussion. It is open to all, regardless of any church affiliation.

We have regular opportunities for involvement with the community throughout the year, such as Holy Week/Easter, Christmas, Harvest Thanksgiving, Remembrance, and school assemblies/services. There is active involvement in the community by individuals within the church. Our Harvest Thanksgiving service is held "on farm", welcoming Christians from other denominations and encouraging the local farming community.



Pier head service at Portmahomack Gala



Christmas Eve service at Nigg Old Church

Pastoral Care

We want to improve our pastoral care as a team, adapting to changes in both our human resources and the changing dynamic in our community. As well as home visiting, pastoral care is taking place within the congregation through online contact, personal conversation via phone or house visits, friendship and discussion, caring together for the whole congregation and beyond. There is an initiative to hold monthly services in Innis Mhor Nursing Home in Tain shared with other local ministers. There is scope to increase pastoral work in the Home.

Kirk Session

The Kirk Session of 11 elders (including a team of 3 Session Clerks, and a single Treasurer) meets monthly, rotating to each of the worship centres, to care for both the administrative and spiritual issues arising within the congregation. However, our elders are increasingly limited by age, especially in Tain, where the number of elders has recently dropped significantly by retirement from active duty. One elder serves as a Property Convener for each of the worship centres.

Demographics

The whole parish has 138 members and 76 adherents. The combined weekly attendance is 90+ over the three centres. Tain, as the largest population centre in the parish, has 60+ in regular attendance, with 20+ at Fearn and 10+ at Portmahomack. In each case this is a substantial reduction on numbers attending before the pandemic. Approximately 75% of the congregation is aged over 60, with 15% aged 30-50 and 10% under 20.

Ecumenical

We welcome and enjoy regular joint events with other local Christian fellowships, and aim to build more joint working as individuals and as fellowships. The wider church across the peninsula is composed of Free Church, United Free Church, New Wine, Free Church Continuing, Scottish Episcopal Church and Roman Catholic Church. We are regularly involved with outreach services in the Seaboard villages, an inter-church Good Friday service in the Tain Rose Garden, and the World Day of Prayer. We also join other congregations at Portmahomack Gala for a pier-head service each July, and we host regular joint Songs of Praise events, which are open to all. Along with other churches, we support the local YMCA Youth Café in its work, and the local Food Bank.

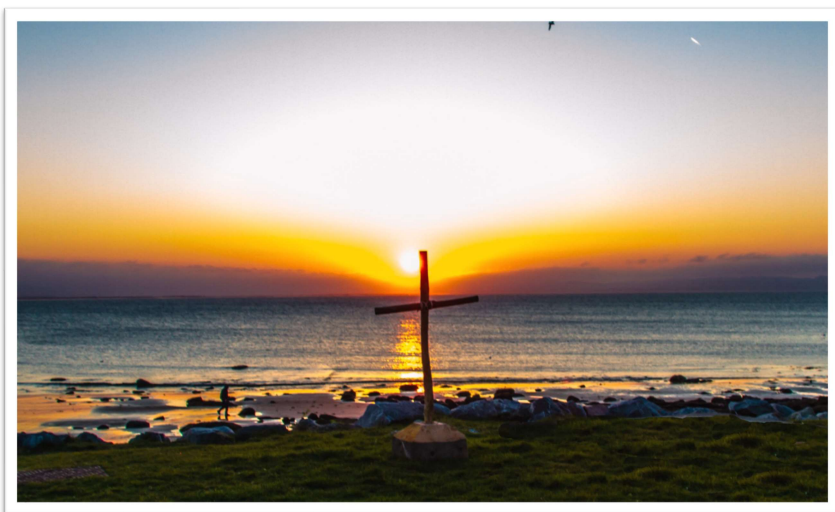
Stewardship and Finance

Under the auspices of stewardship, the annual Gift Day in Tain was preceded by a letter from the minister or session clerk, tactfully suggesting that church members and adherents give prayerful consideration to their giving, whilst emphasising that no-one was being expected to give more than they could afford. This autumn will be the first Gift Day since our union and we are keen to return to the more sociable event that the occasion was pre-Covid.

With the retirement, for health reasons, of the long standing, faithful treasurer in Tain, the new treasurer only had about nine months in office before the union took place and then was superseded by the treasurer of the Portmahomack church, the Fearn treasurer also retiring from office, the decision having been taken that, whilst three joint session clerks was a workable arrangement, one treasurer was more advisable. The former Tain treasurer is completing the task of finalising the Tain accounts, and details of the most recent accounts since the union, and those of the predecessor congregations, will shortly be made available from the Clerk to the Nomination Committee, whose contact details are at the end of this profile.

Staffing

The congregation pays for regular cleaning and grass cutting. All other administration and secretarial work is undertaken voluntarily by the congregation and elders.

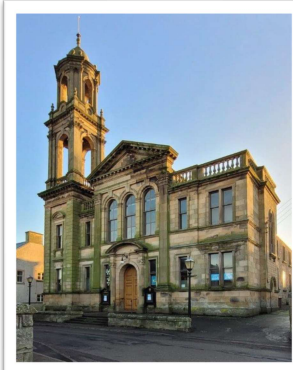


Church buildings, Halls and Manse

The church building at **Fearn** comprises a modern hall, providing a flexible space for worship and fellowship. It accommodates up to 40 for café church and up to 80 with the seating set up in rows. A new AV system and Induction Loop system was installed in 2023 and there is wheelchair access to the front door, accessible toilets and a small kitchen. The hall is located to the east of the historic Fearn Abbey, which is in the process of disposal by the congregation. It is surrounded by a large car park and glebe, which is rented by the neighbouring farmer. The hall is occasionally used by the local community for meetings and as a Polling Station. The former Manse, which was shared with Portmahomack has been sold.



The church building at **Tain** comprises a Victorian United Free Church building. It has level access to the rear and accessible toilets. Seating is in traditional pews, with wheelchair and pushchair accessible spaces. The building was built with a capacity for 1,300. It benefits from a well-designed AV system, including 6 screens (one of which is in the Crèche Room for live streaming the service), and an effective Induction Loop system throughout the building.



The hall building, which comprises 2 separate halls (one of which can be divided into two further separate spaces) is located to the rear of the church building, with a small car park, and fenced off garden area. The halls are available for let by external organisations and

used regularly, although priority is given for congregational activities. The halls benefit from disabled access and a disabled accessible toilet, as well as a well-equipped kitchen suited to large group catering. The hall building is used weekly by the congregation for Mums and Tots, Youth Club, The Gathering, and After-church fellowship.



Our local community

Your life in Easter Ross Peninsula church will be more than work, and we are blessed with living in a beautiful area of Scotland lying on the NC500. There are many local groups and organisations, which you may wish to join. There are opportunities to get involved in martial arts, football, tennis, cold water swimming, coastal rowing and much more. Public and private gyms are available and an indoor swimming pool is located close to the Manse at Tain Royal Academy Community Complex. We have numerous music and choral groups in the area, and there is also an excellent pipe band. Tain, Portmahomack and the Seaboard Villages all have summer gala festivals and there are various book and cultural festivals throughout the year, as well as the Glenmorangie Highland Games and a vintage car rally.

There are several local golf clubs, including the Old Tom Morris designed links at Tain and a deceptively challenging nine hole course at Portmahomack. Royal Dornoch, the best course never to host a major, lies close by as well, albeit not in our Parish. And we are blessed with a number of stunning beaches and beautiful places to walk and unwind.

History also looms large in the Parish with the Tarbat Discovery Centre at Portmahomack and its links to St. Columba; Fearn Abbey (known as “the lamp of the North”), which is one of Scotland’s oldest pre-reformation church buildings; and Tain (Scotland’s oldest Royal Burgh) and its significance as the birthplace of Scotland’s foremost pre-reformation domestic saint, St. Duthus. Nigg Old Church at the southern-most point of the Parish houses the 8th century Nigg Cross Slab – thought to include the earliest known depiction of the eucharist in the British Isles – and the Collegiate Church and Tain Museum provides more history at the centre of Tain.

If you have a young family Tain has a new school campus, incorporating existing Primary, Secondary and Additional Needs schooling, due to open in the Spring of 2025. There is a number of clubs and organisations for young people including the Scouts, Guides, Cadets, Tain Amateur Swimming Club, Tain Tennis Club and Tain Juniors Football Club. For those interested in traditional music there is the fabulous Gizzen Briggs band.



Ecumenical Good Friday Service at Tain Rose Garden

More Information

We hope that we have whetted your appetite and that you feel a call to explore your calling further with us.

For further information or to discuss our vacancy in more detail please contact Mr Jimmy Maxwell, Clerk to the Nominating Committee, by emailing JMaxwell@churchofscotland.org.uk. Informal enquiries may also be made to our Interim Moderator, Rev Carol Rattenbury, by emailing CRattenbury@churchofscotland.org.uk

A copy of the Basis of Union, and Basis of Reviewable Tenure may also be obtained from either of the above.

<https://easterrosspeninsulacofs.co.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/PortmahomackandFearnChurchofScotland>



EASTER ROSS PENINSULA CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: SC012425